

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ON THE LIBERTY OF THOUGHT AND
DISCUSSION IN ECONOMICS

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ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY
ABSTRACT

LORD ASCHROFT INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SCHOOL

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On the liberty of thought and discussion in economics

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This thesis offers a new justification and interpretation of “pluralism in economics” and discusses how it can be implemented. Calls for pluralism reflect discontent with the exclusive dominance of one approach in economics. This perceived monism entails twofold oppression of contesting theories with a legitimate claim to truth and of the academics that promote them. A doctrine of pluralism thus has to satisfy both an epistemological and a moral condition. However, the literature on pluralism in economics either overly associates pluralism with heterodox economics or fails to provide sufficient epistemological and institutional recommendations. The thesis seeks to abstract from the content of current orthodox and heterodox theory in order to give a consistent interpretation of pluralism as a stable and lasting doctrine. Firstly, given epistemic uncertainty, pluralism is required for the advancement of knowledge, the consequences of which are drawn by application of Mill’s arguments for the liberty of thought and discussion and their further development in Feyerabend’s methodological pluralism. Secondly, the doctrine must secure the right of all academics to pursue truth in the ways they deem fit. Drawing on Habermas’ theory of communicative rationality and Longino’s norms for scientific discourse, ideal conditions for pluralist scientific exchange are delineated. Reviewing sociological evidence, it is shown that there is a well-organized hierarchical system in the discipline that reinforces monism through education, journals, hiring/promotion and research funding. Given these constraints, the calls for pluralism amount to a call for liberal education reform in economics, in which the aim is to foster the intellectual development of students. Pluralism is not about accommodating a range of approaches; pluralism ensures an environment that yields academics capable of truth-pursuit in a world of uncertain knowledge. However, intricate links between economics and power relations in society may inhibit its feasibility.

Key words: pluralism, heterodox economics, abstract move, discourse ethics, Matthew effect, liberal education.

Table of contents

Chapter 1. Introduction	1
<i>Enemies of the people</i>	3
<i>The abstract move</i>	7
<i>What is pluralism?</i>	11
Chapter 2. Two concepts of pluralism	14
<i>Ivan's paradox and McLennan's challenge</i>	15
<i>The map and the territory</i>	20
<i>Lawson and the beast</i>	23
<i>Isomorphism?</i>	31
<i>Dow, schools of thought and ontology</i>	32
<i>The spirit of pluralism</i>	43
<i>The ontological view: summary and challenges</i>	44
<i>Screpanti's ethical precept</i>	48
<i>Lee's tolerance</i>	50
<i>Caldwell's critical pluralism</i>	52
<i>Samuels' criticism and credentials</i>	54
<i>Freeman and Kliman's critical pluralism</i>	57
<i>Garnett's traces of paradigmism</i>	61
<i>The lay of the land</i>	66
Chapter 3. Some footnotes to J.S. Mill	71
<i>Happiness and liberty</i>	72
<i>On the liberty of thought and discussion</i>	74
<i>First argument</i>	74
<i>Second argument</i>	76
<i>Third argument</i>	79
<i>Fourth argument</i>	81
<i>Summary of Mill's arguments</i>	84
<i>The condition the condition is in</i>	87
<i>Anything goes</i>	89
<i>Feyerabend and pluralism</i>	93
<i>Where is the world?</i>	102
<i>Is normal science normal?</i>	104
<i>Towards a happy dismal science</i>	106
Chapter 4. Procedural standards for pluralism	108
<i>Political science?</i>	109
<i>Two concepts of liberty</i>	111
<i>Behind the veil of ignorance, and beyond</i>	115
<i>Establishing the standards</i>	119
<i>The rules of discourse</i>	122
<i>Reason: reasonable or social?</i>	128
<i>Norms for critical scientific discourse</i>	132
<i>Towards truth and justice</i>	138

Chapter 5. Pluralism – standard procedure?	140
<i>The Matthew effect</i>	142
<i>Journals and the gospel of St. Matthew</i>	143
<i>Journal impact factors</i>	145
<i>Hierarchy of the sciences</i>	148
<i>Heterodox discrimination</i>	149
<i>Research assessment in the UK</i>	151
<i>Diamonds are forever</i>	154
<i>The superiority of economists</i>	159
<i>View from the top of the pyramid</i>	162
<i>Economics – an ideal critical discourse?</i>	164
<i>The foundation of the pyramid</i>	171
Chapter 6. Pluralism: more than one	173
<i>Fostering capable pluralists</i>	173
<i>The idea of a university</i>	175
<i>The standard economics curriculum</i>	179
<i>Perry's scheme for intellectual development</i>	184
<i>How many is pluralism?</i>	188
<i>History of economic thought at Northampton University</i>	193
<i>Critical thinking</i>	195
<i>Back to pluralism</i>	201
<i>Preliminary conclusion</i>	206
Chapter 7. In place of a conclusion: the limits to pluralism	211
<i>Limit #1: Power struggle</i>	213
<i>The causes of formalism</i>	215
<i>Limit #2: The colonization of economics</i>	217
<i>Thinking becomes technique</i>	220
<i>Limit #3: The violence of education</i>	224
<i>Conclusion</i>	226
References	227

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28.05.2016

Roman Linneberg Eliassen

Chapter 1. Introduction

The majority, being satisfied with the ways of mankind as they now are (for it is they who make them what they are), cannot comprehend why those ways should not be good enough for everybody. (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 63)

In recent years, pluralism has become a buzzword in economics. In addition to being a central topic in economic methodology, it has been at the core of demands of several waves of student protests since the turn of the century. There is a lot of talk about pluralism, but what does it actually mean?

At face value, the calls for pluralism point to the problem: monism. Economics is dominated by a single approach – neoclassical or mainstream or orthodox economics – characterized by a reliance on certain methodological principles, such as mathematical formalism (e.g. Lawson, 2003), to the exclusion of approaches that do not conform to these principles. The general sentiment among proponents of pluralism is that this methodological monism has rendered the discipline unable to explain key economic phenomena in our time. Without further scrutiny, however, the term “pluralism” does not mean much more than “solution” or “alternative” to the perceived problem. We need to go beyond this simple suggestion: Monism is the problem; pluralism is the answer. There is a need for a clear and consistent conception of pluralism, and this must be anchored in a clear and consistent understanding of why we need and want it.

Monism has come under attack in two separate, yet intrinsically linked, areas: economic theory and economics education. Regarding economic theory, the criticism is mainly launched by heterodox economists, who claim, for example, that the virtual silencing of heterodox theory has diminished the range of policy tools both in the run-up to and in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Furthermore, it is claimed that by turning a deaf ear to heterodoxy, orthodox economists have deprived themselves of valuable perspectives that could have enhanced their theoretical understanding of recent events and even aided in predicting them.¹ What regards education, we have

¹ Bezemer (2010) shows that several heterodox economists, e.g. Wynne Godley, Steve Keen, Michael Hudson and Dean Baker predicted the financial crisis of 2008- quite accurately. So did a few of the more unconventional mainstream economists like Robert Shiller, Joseph Stiglitz and Nouriel Roubini. However, in proportional terms, the mainstream economists were severely outnumbered by the heterodox.

seen the rise of international student-based movements such as the International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics (ISIPE) and Rethinking Economics,² who call for wholesale curricular change aimed at including a range of schools of thought, history of economic ideas, economic history and more discussion of the politico-economic problems of our time.

Mainstream economics has not been totally unresponsive. On the theoretical front, we have seen the rise to prominence of behavioural economics, and mainstream economists often cite the increase in empirical and experimental work over the last decades as examples of improvement. Some attempts at curricular improvement have been launched from the mainstream, such as the CORE³ curriculum, led by Professor Wendy Carlin in the UK. Even if such developments are seen as sufficient response by many mainstream economists, critics are far from impressed (AHE, 2014; Morgan, 2015). The methodological and theoretical frameworks remain largely the same. Each view is loaded with its own preconceptions. Neither can be taken as ultimate arbiters of the intellectual health of the profession. For this, we need an analytical approach; it is this that I seek to develop in this dissertation.

This contribution is accordingly neither directly intervening in on-going struggles nor is it seeking answers to theoretical disputes between orthodox and heterodox economics or judging their respective merits. It explores a problem situation, in which a body of thought is so dominant that it effectively silences other viewpoints. Based on the principles that all theories, and bodies of thought as a whole, are fallible and multiple valid approaches exist, it shows the unsoundness of intellectual monopoly and discusses possible resolutions. It takes the sources of criticism very seriously without embracing any specific views of those who raise it. It is seeking to understand why the criticism is not responded to (if this can actually taken to be the case) in a way that any bystander would intuitively deem intellectually respectable.

There are three general questions involved in the discourse on pluralism in economics, namely, 1) what is pluralism, 2) why is it desirable and 3) how can it be implemented (if at all)? These are the questions around which this thesis revolves.

² This follows an earlier wave of student protests starting with the post-autistic movement in Paris in 2000, with repercussions in Cambridge in 2001 and Harvard in 2003 (PAECON, n.d.), in addition to the recent International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics (ISIPE, 2014).

³ Curriculum Open-access Resources in Economics

The simple suggestion points to the justification (why), which seems to be the starting point of the debate, from which specifications of content (what) and implementation (how) follow. There is, I contend, a conflation of the different sources of the calls for pluralism, leading to inconsistencies in most accounts of pluralism presented to date. I identify two sources of the calls for pluralism: demands for *truth* and demands for *justice*, respectively.⁴ In other words, pluralism has both epistemological and moral content, and hence a pluralist doctrine needs to satisfy both epistemological and moral⁵ conditions. One of my contentions in this thesis is that none of the positions on pluralism in economics to date fulfils both conditions satisfactorily. Only when we disentangle the transient cause of current heterodox economics from the perennial cause of pluralism will a picture of the pluralist academy emerge, in which truth-pursuing economists of all brands are allowed to flourish.

Enemies of the people

What do I mean by demands of truth and justice? When heterodox economists advocate pluralism, it is partly because they think that they are being unjustifiably excluded from the mainstream of the profession. As all scientific practitioners, the heterodox economist thinks that her theories have a legitimate claim to truth about economic phenomena. In this way, pluralism is seen as a remedy to the deficient conditions for truth (or knowledge) advancement – the inherent *telos* of all scientific activity. The heterodox economist moreover judges an academic environment in which legitimate viewpoints are being suppressed as unjust. This is a more subtle point, yet it is extremely important. Taking the full consequences of this moral

⁴ At this stage, since we are merely pointing to the locus of the demands for pluralism and not its actual formulation, further precision with regard to these two terms is not strictly required. An attempt at precise definitions, or embracing any existing definitions, of these terms would in all likelihood lead to philosophical *cul-de-sacs* and would also appear to run counter to the spirit of pluralism; for my purposes, it is sufficient that the conception of pluralism answers to these two conditions in a satisfactory manner. Moreover, it might be argued that we should be talking of *liberty* instead of justice. The relation between these two grand concepts for the purposes of pluralism is, naturally, not straightforward. Generally speaking, justice is required to safeguard the liberty of thought and discussion in the discipline. However, the detailed elaboration of these intricacies must be dealt with at a suitable later occasion.

⁵ In this dissertation, I use “moral” and “ethical” somewhat interchangeably. The “moral” appeals to the universal character of pluralism, whereas the “ethical” appeals to the more lifeworldly aspects of academia (character-formation and the like). Both dimensions, to the extent that moral and ethics are distinct, are subsumed under the same demand for pluralism in my thesis. Such interchanging of the notions is in line with Vetlesen (2007).

condition places a great demand on pluralists, especially if the dominant views, that you yourself want to supplant, appear to you as false, and even unfounded. It is therefore paramount to envisage a situation in which the now prevailing views are the views of a minority, and your own views, which today may rest on the most critical self-examination, are but empty formulas carelessly repeated by false professors of truth seeking to hand down the received (but long lost) doctrine to the next generation of soothsayers.

There is, of course, nothing new about a situation in which minority views are being suppressed openly or tacitly without sufficient reason. It is a variation of a common theme, which has been dealt with amongst others by Henrik Ibsen in his play *An Enemy of the People*. In this play, the protagonist, Dr Stockmann, has discovered an unpalatable truth about the public baths in the small Norwegian coastal town in which he lives, which is a great attraction and source of revenue. The baths are contaminated by the local tannery. The local lords of industry and politicians naturally hold high stakes in both businesses and have a strong interest in repressing this finding; it is, moreover, difficult for popular opinion to accept that the town's prosperity is built on a filthy foundation, and in addition the local press seems to be opportunistically serving vested interests. The whole town turns against Dr Stockmann as the play reaches its climax in a public meeting in which Stockmann is presenting his findings.

The scene leads Stockmann into uttering the following judgment: "The most dangerous enemies of truth and freedom are the majority! Yes, the solid, liberal, bloody majority" (Ibsen, 1980 [1882]: 192). In fact, not only does the majority suppress the minority view, it seems *always* to be in the wrong:

The majority is never right. (...) Who form the majority – in any country? The wise, or the fools? I think we'd all have to agree that the fools are in a terrifying, overwhelming majority all over the world! (...) The majority has the power – unfortunately – but the majority is not right! The ones who are right are a few isolated individuals like me! The minority is always right! (Ibsen, 1980 [1882]: 192-193)

The disjunction here introduced between being in power and being right⁶ is of great interest. The above quote will resonate among heterodox economists, who believe they are in the right against the views of the majority of economists, and there is a sense of oppression of the former by the latter. Moreover, the orthodox majority has the power to define the legitimate discourse of economics. Thus Dr Stockmann's experience at least resembles the experience of the heterodox economist.

Ibsen's play has certain comedic features. The dictum that "the minority is always right" should not be interpreted in any absolute sense. Yet we could do much worse than using it as a *memento* whenever we are faced with a novel theory that seems to shake up the foundations of existing theories. The social forces that bring about consensus – in non-rational ways – exhibited by Ibsen are indeed strong in scientific communities as well, as we will see. Ridicule and mass psychology can in certain ways become institutionalized and rationalized into the way a scientific field organizes its production of knowledge. This is not to say that ridicule and mass psychology are the main exclusionary mechanisms in the economics profession; we would give ourselves a much too easy and yet useless task by taking such routes of explanation. Yet it will emerge that the beliefs of proponents of majority scientific viewpoints frequently rest on unexamined grounds and all the more so, the less critical engagement there is with alternative viewpoints.

Is knowledge always advanced from the fringes of thought, from unexpected realms? In some way, new knowledge is in its nature unexpected, otherwise there would be nothing novel about it. Yet the process by which new knowledge is brought about is a complicated one, which, among other things, necessarily draws on a social community of knowers. In this light, Stockmann's final words before the curtains fall, "the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone" (Ibsen, 1980 [1882]: 222) are simply wrong, on my contextual reading.

The tale of Dr Stockmann is not simply a literary artefact. Ibsen was influenced by John Stuart Mill and the theme addressed was dealt with by Mill in the second chapter of his seminal work *On Liberty*, "On the liberty of thought and discussion". How should we treat minority views? Mill radically states the case: "If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if

⁶ The Norwegian term "rett" covers both "rightness" and "justice".

he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind” (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 21). Mill is revolting against “the tyranny of the majority”. For him, there is no justification for silencing an opponent, however small the minority may be – say just a single individual, like Stockmann.

The basic fact taken as a starting point by Mill is the *fallibility of human knowledge*. The received opinion could always be wrong. Any attempt, in one way or another, to silence contesting views assumes a measure of infallibility. The first implication of the fallibility of human knowledge is that no reasonable ground exists for orthodox economists not to listen to heterodox economists (or, indeed, vice versa). Indeed, it would be advantageous for the purposes of truth seeking to actively encourage such opposing views, regardless of which view would emerge triumphant.

If the majority is always wrong, we do, of course, have to question it. Yet it turns out that even if the majority view is right, we have to question it. I will elaborate Mill’s argument for this in chapter 3, as his treatment of the liberty of thought and discussion will form the frame for my abstract treatment of pluralism. However, what Mill calls the fallibility of all viewpoints, I will here refer to as epistemic uncertainty. Epistemic uncertainty is the main premise for pluralism.

“Methodological pluralism begins with the assumption that no single optimal methodology is discoverable”, wrote Bruce Caldwell (1982: 250), who is generally credited with having initiated the literature on pluralism in economics. Caldwell states that the quest for one single method is over and thereby points to the fact of inescapable epistemic uncertainty, the fallibility of all knowledge. This is a general insight in the so-called post-positivist philosophy of science, most notably the work of Thomas Kuhn (1996 [1970]) and Paul Feyerabend (2010⁷). No reference to invariable “reality”, as an ultimate arbiter of theoretical propositions, is possible.

The demise of positivism, falsificationism and other monist methodologies provides space for methodological pluralism (Caldwell, 1982: 244-245). One important question that arises is what the absence of an absolute standard implies. For surely it cannot mean the mere absence of standards? This dilemma haunts the discourse on pluralism. All conceptions of pluralism start from the fact that no single universal method can be found but they differ on the conclusions they draw. For now, it will suffice with a brief comment on how both the sources for concern about

⁷ I refer throughout only to the year of publication of the fourth edition of *Against Method*, as all the editions of this work involve major revision of the content.

monism in mainstream economics arise from epistemic uncertainty: 1) the lack of *truth* and 2) the lack of *justice*.

Pluralism, in promoting or supporting the theories and methodologies that heterodox economists believe to be better, is perceived by heterodox economists as contributing to the advancement of truth, which they believe is held back by the monist orthodoxy. At the same time, it is seen (albeit less explicitly) as contributing to long hoped-for justice for heterodox economists by ensuring their right to take part in discourse and pursue scientific activity in the way they deem fit. Moreover, this call for justice interestingly invokes the character of the individual scientist and the preservation of the dignity of scholars and their possibilities for self-realization. My contention is, in short, that heterodox economists, proponents of pluralism, see monism as both untruthful and unjust. A coherent justification of pluralism should therefore address both truth and justice, hence satisfying both the epistemological and moral conditions.

Epistemic uncertainty is the *prima facie* justification of pluralism as a means for truth advancement and must therefore be consistently interpreted. The moral condition, in its turn, brings another criterion into play. Being a moral doctrine for the community of economics, pluralism should be universalized, i.e. the doctrine should be acceptable to everyone affected by it, orthodox and heterodox alike.⁸ At this point I must submit a caveat: the fact that heterodox economists think their theories are more truthful than orthodox theories, combined with it being epistemologically advantageous to advance them within the mainstream discourse today, does not mean that they are necessarily better theories. The crucial epistemological point lies in the facilitation of contrasting ideas, as a principle.

The abstract move

The discourse on pluralism in economics tends to focus on the current situation in economics and the distinction between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Justifications for pluralism tend to refer in one way or another to the specific contents of these terms as

⁸ This is in line with Habermas' (1990 [1983]: 120) universalization principle: "For a norm to be valid, the consequences and side effects that its general observance can be expected to have for the satisfaction of the particular interests of each person affected must be such that all affected can accept them freely." Yet this universal appeal of moral doctrines runs throughout the history of moral philosophy and is involved (e.g.) in Kant's deontological ethics and versions of utilitarianism.

currently perceived, such as mathematical deductivism or open system theorizing. This is natural, since the current predicament of heterodox economics is the *origin* of most doctrines of pluralism. Nevertheless, this origin is contingent and can cloud the wider matter at hand. Although the need for pluralism is sensed in the present, and hence the doctrine put forward must be informed by the current situation, we need to move beyond the particulars of the heterodox predicament to an abstract justification of pluralism. The point I want to make is similar to Martha Nussbaum's explanation of why ethical theories should be abstract:

Theories of social justice should be abstract. They should, that is, have a generality and theoretical power that enables them to reach beyond the political conflicts of their time, even if they have their origins in such conflicts. Even political justification requires such abstraction: for we cannot justify a political theory unless we can show that it can be stable over time, receiving citizens' support for more than narrowly self-protective or instrumental reasons. And we cannot show that it can be stable without standing back from immediate events.⁹ (Nussbaum, 2006: 1)

In the same way, we have to stand back from the immediate events – the predicament of heterodoxy in the current orthodox empire. Only in this way can we arrive at a stable and lasting doctrine of pluralism. What does this abstract move entail?

We tend to depict economics as divided into orthodox and heterodox economics. However, the referents of the terms “orthodoxy” and “heterodoxy” are ultimately transient; the only constant in the relation between them is their dichotomous opposition. Thus the abstract move invites abstract formulations of these terms. The current heterodox predicament should be understood primarily as the instance of a general problem situation. Heterodoxy is “other belief”, and as such it necessarily stands in opposition to the received, “true belief”, orthodoxy. Heterodoxy cannot supersede orthodoxy and yet preserve its heterodox characteristics – its name and identity. This would be a contradiction in terms. The power of heterodox thought rests primarily in the negation of orthodoxy and only derivatively in the positive views it puts forward, however much more adequate they may appear to some. In other words, there is an on-going dialectical process between the two.

⁹ The quote could be misread out of context, since Nussbaum is writing this as a proviso before distancing herself from the purely procedural and most abstract moral theories and embarking upon her relatively substantive formulations.

In shaping the abstract conception of orthodoxy, I suggest we take our lead from Syme in Orwell's (2003 [1949]: 61) *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, who states: "Orthodoxy means not thinking – not needing to think". The merit of this conception is, firstly, that it resonates with heterodox criticisms of mainstream teaching and journal articles, involving blind repetition of the hedonistic calculus without any critical reflection upon the methods used. Furthermore, the conception applies to any orthodoxy qua orthodoxy. If heterodoxy, then, is defined in terms of its opposition to orthodoxy, it can be seen as guided by the *need to think*, and consisting in *thinking* and in questioning the received belief. In this scheme of things, it is the need to think, or, to put it more specifically, to think critically, that is currently being suppressed in the economics profession and education. Pluralism originates as a remedy for the suppression of the need to think.

If, then, one sees heterodoxy as motivated by the need to think, the specific content of the orthodox and heterodox doctrines, respectively, is of secondary importance. The full ramifications of the abstract definition are, however, not yet clear. For if it is in some sense true that all truths are transient,¹⁰ the saga does not end if a paradigm shift takes place and orthodoxy is replaced by heterodoxy. In that case, heterodoxy becomes the new orthodoxy. The tyranny of the majority will simply reappear in a new guise unless countervailing measures are in place. This is exactly where pluralism has to intervene.

Where does the abstract move take us with regard to what the pluralist academy looks like? It refers to the academic culture of the discipline, its institutional structure. Importantly, this locus can be traced in the campaigns led by teachers and students alike for a more open and diverse economics, as evidenced by this quotation from the French university teachers campaigning for pluralism: "Pluralism must be part of the basic culture of the economist. People in their research should be free to develop the type and direction of thinking to which their convictions and field of interest lead them" (Sent, 2003). It also resonates with the following quotation from students at Cambridge University (Cambridge 27, 2001) campaigning for *opening up economics*: "Pluralism as a default implies that alternative economic work is not

¹⁰ "A normal truth lives for – what shall I say? – seventeen to eighteen years on average – twenty years at the most – seldom longer" (Ibsen, 1980 [1882]: 193).

simply tolerated, but that the material and social conditions for its flourishing are met.”¹¹

These excerpts give an indication that the root of the problem lies in the lack of justice and tolerance; moreover, that these deficiencies are of an institutional nature; and that they inhibit academic discourse as well as the flourishing of the individual academic. The cited sources then go on to specifying problems with the theoretical content of current mainstream economics, but this problematic is of the second order. As the thesis should be built on the established views arrived at by brave and wise pluralists heretofore – the *endoxa* – this shows promise for the approach here taken. A two-level analysis is required, which, firstly, establishes the content and justification of a doctrine of pluralism and, secondly, forms a strategy for implementing this, given the institutional constraints.¹²

This undertaking seeks to demonstrate that pluralism has a double rationale in serving 1) *the advancement of knowledge (truth)* and 2) *the self-realization of academics (justice)* and to render explicit how this twofold purpose can be achieved. To specify, the second aspect relates to the enhancement of the individual academic’s freedom and capacity for critical thinking. The two components are, then, precisely what scientific endeavour should comprise of. Moreover, the aspects are interrelated. The relation involves a specific conception of knowledge as somehow entrenched in the individual researcher. It is instructive here to develop a notion of “academic capabilities”.¹³ Academic capabilities have at their core the nurturing of the human intellect, the dignity of academics as persons and freedom and justice for academics

¹¹ The statement of purpose from the International Confederation of Associations for Pluralism in Economics (ICAPE) provides further justification for the approach by highlighting, firstly, the association of pluralism with intellectual progress and, secondly, by pointing to the institutional constraints: “ICAPE is dedicated to the idea that pluralism and intellectual progress are complements. This is not to say “anything goes,” but that each tradition of thought (Austrian, feminist, old and new institutionalist, Marxian, neoclassical, Postkeynesian, social economics, Sraffian, etc.) adds something unique and valuable to economic scholarship. Achieving productive discussion and debate across schools of economic thought is not a simple matter. There are many institutional and practical obstacles to pluralism. It is precisely by helping to remove those obstacles that ICAPE hopes to render a service to the community of economists throughout the world.”

¹² When we talk about *improving* the discipline – the *science* – this does, naturally, bear on its ability to pursue truth. The investigation must therefore take account of how *scientific progress* (under some reasonable understanding of this term) takes place in the realm of economics. The institutional arrangements of the profession must be of a kind that can facilitate such scientific practices that lead to the advancement of knowledge.

¹³ This draws on the work of Martha Nussbaum (2000; 2006) and Amartya Sen (1999) on the capabilities approach.

in the academy. *Prima facie*, this should be beneficial to heterodox and orthodox economists alike.

By making the abstract move, it can be seen that pluralism is not confined to economics; it has some bearing on the academic predicament in general. Although the institutional constraints on intellectual flourishing may be particularly severe in economics, present day developments in the higher education and university sector present similar challenges to academics across the board.

Moreover, the discussion ultimately bears on wider societal concerns. The silencing of opinions, theories etc., can be detrimental to both the advancement of knowledge and to the well-being of the community. John Stuart Mill states what is at stake: “the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it” (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 21). The implications of this statement are, firstly, if we assume that scientists are well-meaning, truth-seeking individuals, we could claim that the virtual silencing of heterodox economists by the mainstream in a sense has deprived the latter more than the former, since the former to a certain extent can believe and claim to have understood something that the latter have not. Secondly, and more broadly, if it is a fair assessment to say that financial malady in recent decades and austerity policies pursued in Europe today has been legitimized by flawed economic theories, Mill’s statement sheds light on the current economic malaise. The high unemployment rates, especially among the youth in southern Europe, in a sense amounts to “robbing the human race” – today, as well as in the future, if the fear that a lost generation is in the making is validated.

What is pluralism?

What is pluralism, then? The details will be spelled out over the course of the dissertation, but some first indications are in place. I see the calls for pluralism in economics as being, ultimately, a call for liberal education reform in economics. Pluralism describes a scientific community, in which the members acknowledge the validity of different viewpoints and see it as their obligation that the venues for their dispersion are upheld. At least this is what the calls for pluralism consistently amount to – I will leave it to others to discuss whether that is still worthy of the name of pluralism. Pluralism is therefore tangible in the sense that the institutional setup of the

discipline must facilitate – in fact, encourage – multiple viewpoints, but it is not tangible in the sense that a certain number or range of theoretical perspectives can be expected to be represented in discourse. It is the job of an appropriately working scientific discourse to root out perspectives that lead to dead ends,¹⁴ by means of criticism. Pluralism then requires an attitude that must be nurtured to ensure that such critical practice is the norm. This can only be achieved by reforming the economics curricula in a way that puts critical thinking and intellectual development at centre stage. The thesis is – perhaps romantically, perhaps rationalistically – based on the premise that the better argument will prevail and in a sense it stands and falls with this premise. Pluralism may not be possible without this condition. Yet a weighty counterargument, or at least a worry, would be that the dominance of mainstream economics is intrinsically linked with aspects of ideology and power in the wider community, and that scientific discourse is in some inescapable way subordinate to these. The better argument does not in itself overthrow tyranny. This would not mean that the heterodox cause would be lost, only that the heterodox struggle should not be seen as pluralistic. Or, alternatively, if it is pluralistic, the struggle for pluralism also takes on prevailing power structures in society at large. As a result, my analysis would require substantial supplementation.

In chapter 2, I will review the main positions and contributions on pluralism in economics to date. The need to properly disentangle the cause of heterodoxy from the cause of pluralism will emerge from this. In chapter 3, I embark upon this abstract move by expounding John Stuart Mill's arguments for the liberty of thought and discussion, based on the fallibility of all viewpoints (epistemic uncertainty) and Paul Feyerabend's application of this view in the philosophy of science. We arrive at the demand for the continuous encouragement of opposing ideas, for both epistemological and moral reasons. In chapter 4, I discuss the institutional conditions for ideal, critical scientific discourse, drawing on the analyses of Jürgen Habermas and Helen Longino and arrive at some workable criteria for evaluation. In chapter 5, I investigate whether the current institutional organization of economics, with its system of publishing, hiring and promotion and research funds allocation, is working in accordance with this ideal to a satisfactory extent. To put the conclusion briefly, it is not working, as the hierarchy of the discipline serves to maintain prevailing ideas

¹⁴ It is important, however, that this does not happen prematurely.

and fails at accommodating different theoretical perspectives; the discipline fails at meeting the requirement of “tempered equality” between academics with different approaches. In chapter 6, I argue that the scientific values governing the hierarchy of the discipline can be changed by altering the typical education of economists, aiming at forming critical and capable scholars well-versed in diversity. In the concluding chapter 7, I put the analysis into a wider context of the role of economics in society, providing a broader perspective and pointing out future routes for analysis that this thesis has opened up, yet not fully explored.

Chapter 2. Two concepts of pluralism

But our account would be adequate, if we achieved a degree of precision appropriate to the underlying material; for precision must not be sought to the same degree in all accounts of things (...) for it is a mark of an educated person to look for precision in each kind of inquiry just to the extent that the nature of the subject allows it. (*Nicomachean Ethics*: 1094b13-26)

Salanti (1997) asserts that pluralism in economics is advocated from two different perspectives. One is epistemologically motivated, and draws on “the belief that the world ‘out there’ must be, after all, a determining factor of our scientific knowledge” (Salanti, 1997: 29). The other is the ethically based call for pluralism, associated with “pragmatism and hermeneutics”, to borrow Habermas’ (1984 [1981]) term. Whereas the former seems (to a varying extent) to restrain the scope of pluralism, thus violating the ethical component, the latter seems to lack clear epistemological implications. This leads Screpanti (1997) to ask the question of whether pluralism is a methodological canon *or* an ethical precept. He concludes that it is the latter. My purpose is to seek a justification and conception of pluralism that overcomes this conflict, to explore if this is at all possible.

The calls for pluralism have two different, albeit intertwined, sources, namely demands for *truth* and demands for *justice*. To investigate more fully to what extent the various contributions to the literature on pluralism in economics to date meet these requirements, I shall need to review it, by asking the following review questions:

- *What are the existing conceptions and justifications of pluralism in economics?*
- *To what extent do they fulfil the demands of truth and justice, respectively?*

All writings on pluralism start from the fact that no universal single method can be found, but they differ as to the reasons for why there is such epistemic uncertainty and what it implies. Justifications for pluralism have implications for the resulting conceptions and proposals for implementation. The justifications range from a pure “ontological view” on one side of the spectrum to a pure “tolerance view” on the

other. The range in-between is covered with various combinations of these two positions, and some that seek to go beyond them.

After some initial considerations, the chapter moves to a critical appraisal of the two main proponents of the ontological view, who take *ontology* or *realism* as a starting point for their justification of pluralism, namely Lawson (2003; 2009a; 2010) and Dow (1997; 2004; 2008; 2014). I argue that this is a mistaken starting point, as the epistemological condition is undermined by the fallibility of ontological doctrines, however broadly they are cast. In addition, this position relies too heavily on existing schools of thought in its constructive attempts. It does not fulfil the moral condition either, since some economists (currently the vast majority) are notionally degraded as they subscribe to an inferior methodology.

I then move on to other contributions, starting from the tolerance view, represented by Lee (2009; 2011a) and Screpanti (1997), before I evaluate some other positions that in various ways fuse the epistemological and ethical demands of pluralism. The latter approaches are the most consistent with pluralism as I conceive it. Yet there is a lot missing in the institutional recommendations for improvement, and no workable standards to evaluate the scientific practice in economics have been devised. This is the main point at which I seek to intervene with this thesis.¹⁵

My contention is, then, that none of the contributions thus far succeed in fulfilling the demands for both truth (the epistemological condition) and justice (the moral condition). I will explain why I think this is the case, and what is needed in order to rectify the situation. Moreover, the conception of pluralism must be cast as a solution to the problem in economics as it is perceived by the proponents of pluralism (mostly heterodox economists), i.e. as a remedy to the current monism. In order to arrive at an ethically neutral, yet epistemologically prescriptive, doctrine, I will challenge the dichotomy posed by Salanti (1997), Screpanti (1997) and others. A doctrine of pluralism needs to retain both the epistemological and ethical components. Pluralism is meant to lead to both truth and justice in the academy.

Ivan's paradox and McLennan's challenge

In discussing pluralism with my friend Ivan, I was trying to bring home the point that genuine pluralism in economics cannot exclude neoclassical economics, no matter

¹⁵ This chapter is a review of the *concept* of pluralism, and is not meant to be exhaustive of all contributors to the topic; other contributions will be touched upon throughout the thesis.

what you think of its theoretical and methodological programme. Having been sceptical at first, something struck Ivan with full force and he broke out: “I think I fully agree with you, but I do not understand how it is possible. I see no use for neoclassical economics, but we must provide space for it to exist! But how can I mean these two things at the same time?” Let us call this Ivan’s paradox for now: the combination of the opinion that a theoretical approach does have the right to exist with the opinion that it does *not* have the right to exist. Ivan’s paradox permeates the writings on pluralism in economics and it must be transcended.

I stated above that it is not clear exactly what is being called for under the banner of pluralism. Some economic methodologists have brought important clarifications and nuances to this debate.¹⁶ I see fit, initially, to give it a more general perspective. One reason for this is that I would like to start by investigating what the calls for pluralism actually and consistently amount to, rather than discerning analytically between different forms of pluralism that may or may not bear on the issues in question.

Even if talk of pluralism has exploded in economics over the last couple of decades, debates on pluralism have been recurring, especially in the social sciences and humanities, for the better parts of a century.¹⁷ The sociologist Gregor McLennan (1995) has given a survey of the main issues and positions debated under the heading of pluralism, and he poses a few challenges that might inhibit the fruitfulness of pluralism as a solution. Since economic pluralists too rarely draw on perspectives from other fields, citing his main points gives a good overview of the issues involved. The problems he mentions are recurring in the pluralism debate in economics.

A first point of McLennan (1995: ix) is that pluralism is a modal concept and not a substantive end point doctrine. This is a crucial distinction: pluralism is something more than plurality. We may, for example, have a plurality of theories, methods and methodologies without this being seen as desirable by anyone involved. In fact, plurality as an *outcome* – at least in a numerical understanding – is not what

¹⁶ For example, Mäki (1997) importantly distinguishes between *plurality* and *pluralism*; the latter is an endorsement of the former in some realm. Among the different kinds of pluralities we can be pluralists about are ontological, veristic, intensional, theoretical, linguistic, epistemological, pragmatic, methodological, meta-methodological, axiological, ethical and ideological pluralities (Mäki, 1997: 38).

¹⁷ More recently, the debate has blossomed in the natural sciences as well, as evidenced in Kellert, Longino and Waters (2006).

pluralism is about. Pluralism does acknowledge the validity of multiple approaches, but it does not reserve space for any approach in particular.

Another assertion, which I will draw on, is that we are in a post-positivist methodological condition. The notion of *objectivity* is challenged if we accept the theory-ladenness of observation, the cultural (or, perhaps, tradition-relative) specificity of theory and the transience of knowledge (McLennan, 1995: 57-59).

McLennan (1995: 6) divides calls for pluralism into three different domains, i.e., “methodological”, “sociocultural” and “political” pluralism. Methodological pluralism involves positing the existence of a multiplicity of approaches and paradigms as well as many things or worlds; sociocultural pluralism means stating that there are many types of important social relations and subcultures as well as multiple identities and selves; and political pluralism commits to recognition of sociocultural difference, facilitating and representing such difference in decision-making arrangements. The pluralism in economics debate naturally pertains to the methodological side. It does, however, also clearly touch upon political pluralism, something I will pursue in the following chapters.

McLennan (1995: 57) describes “methodological pluralism” as a broad outlook that accepts “that a diversity of valid philosophies, paradigms, general theories, approaches to research, and value orientations exist, and that it is neither possible nor desirable to say definitively which amongst these are more objective, true, scientific, or essential.”¹⁸ McLennan (1995: 66) here notes the rise of “metatheory”, which “is defined by a ‘reflexive awareness of multiplicity’ and by its commitment to theoretical pluralism and egalitarianism”. This sees theoretical confusion and variety as productive and thereby steps back from attempting to resolve it. The position depicted resembles the one I am going to take in this thesis.¹⁹ We must therefore look at the three conundrums McLennan poses for the metatheorist.

The first conundrum is that pluralism must here be understood as encompassing approaches that have inherent monistic ambitions, such as positivism. Even if it can be contested whether mainstream methodology is necessarily monistic in this intolerant manner, this claim is made by some authors in the pluralism debate

¹⁸ Methodological pluralism is, furthermore, subdivided into “technical-methodological”, “epistemological” and “ontological” pluralism (McLennan, 1995: 67).

¹⁹ Sheila Dow’s (2008) notion of pluralism at the meta-methodological level, an analytical move that I will embrace, is precisely such a metatheoretical position.

in economics (most notably Tony Lawson) and the resulting problems for a doctrine of pluralism will become evident. The second conundrum relates to metatheoretical perspectives that seek to incorporate existing paradigmatic approaches as distinct pieces of the whole picture. The problem with such an approach is that it glosses over the fundamental differences between separate traditions. Lawson's attempt to unify a pluralistic heterodoxy has been criticized precisely for taking the fundamental differences between some heterodox approaches too light-heartedly. The third conundrum relates to whether we are envisaging a "post-paradigmatic" situation or an open acceptance of multiple paradigms. At this point, I do not see a fundamental problem, but we may be faced with a choice. It is an important discussion, which will figure quite prominently in this dissertation, and which culminates in the confrontation of Paul Feyerabend with Thomas Kuhn. It invokes a central discussion of the roles of the individual and the social, respectively, in the formation of knowledge.²⁰

McLennan (1995: 74) moreover notes the opposition of an eclectic or pragmatic pluralism – an *attitude* pluralism – and a *doctrinal* pluralism. The former, according to McLennan, can shun the problems of the limits of pluralism, but thereby escapes giving a clear answer to the problem of standards and procedures. The doctrinal variant points to the need to draw on diverging paradigm traditions. The reader will see this clash evolve in my engagement with authors such as Sheila Dow and Robert Garnett, where I take up the former position and they the latter.

It is worth noting McLennan's rather liberal use of the term "methodological pluralism" as denoting all scientific calls for pluralism. I am sympathetic to this broad usage, even if it is sometimes necessary to clarify whether we speak of pluralism of theory, method, methodology or epistemology. Sometimes, however, this subdivision of the issue clouds the fact that the calls for pluralism in economics are in fact calls for the same thing. At least it will be my contention that there is one consistent interpretation of what is actually being demanded by the calls for pluralism.

This is contrary to McLennan, who ends up suggesting that the variety of methodological pluralisms is too great to spell out a precise definition. In noting the different takes on methodological pluralism, McLennan (1995: 64) states that "the current widespread consensus around methodological pluralism can only take a

²⁰ I will seek to resolve this question for our purposes in chapter 4.

limited and negative form: the denial that there is any ‘one proper set of rules’ in the study of human behaviour.” This, moreover, means that

(...) quasi foundationalists such as philosophical realists in the social sciences would also be entitled to participate in the pluralist accord. Realists might say that whilst there are of course many valid points of exploring reality, and many partial truths at any given point in time, it is still rational to presuppose the existence of one real (complexly structured) reality, and to project in principle one set of truths for each object domain. (McLennan, 1995: 64)

I will, however, contest the place of realism as a foundation for pluralism in this chapter, as I believe it circumscribes the scientific playing field more than we can allow. In a way, pluralism draws life from the very fact that we cannot seek absolute foundations; philosophical realism in any form, when taken as the point of departure, makes additional foundational demands that cannot be admitted here. One does not legislate for scientific progress, McCloskey (1985) points out. This would imply an assumption of infallibility; “it is not the feeling sure of a doctrine (...) which I call an assumption of infallibility. It is the undertaking to decide that question *for others*” (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 28). Rather, what we need is an *uncontroversial* starting point. The doctrine must be universalized, i.e. the doctrine should be acceptable by everyone affected by it. Epistemic uncertainty gives us the lead we need to follow. This does not mean that I think ontology unimportant; it is just not suitable as a starting point. Yet it seems fair to demand *ontological commitment* on the part of scientists, even if “realisticness” is further down the list of evaluation criteria.²¹

A more comprehensive review of the pluralism debate follows. However, we can already see that there are several issues that must be resolved. I intend, not to adopt any of the established vantage points, but rather to intermediate between them by picking up what I perceive to be a loose thread in the discourse and in this way construct what I hope is a fresh perspective on the matter.

²¹ I am indebted to Yannick Slade Caffarel for this point on ontological commitment, which he made at the 6th annual IIPPE conference in Leeds. Bigo and Negru’s (2008) “ontologically reflexive pluralism” seems to invoke a similar demand.

The map and the territory

There is a long tradition of looking at pluralism as an ontological, or ontologically informed, concept. Pragmatist philosopher William James used the term “pluralistic” in ontological discourse in a series of lectures titled “A Pluralistic Universe”. James (1909: 9, my emphasis) describes the world in the following way: “Nature, more demonic than divine, is above all things *multifarious*”. And, more specifically,

(...) the pluralistic view which I prefer to adopt is willing to believe that there may ultimately never be an all-form at all, that the substance of reality may never get totally collected, that some of it may remain outside of the largest combination of it ever made, and that a distributive form of reality, the *each*-form, is logically as acceptable and empirically as probable as the all-form commonly acquiesced in as so obviously the self-evident thing. (James, 1909: 11, my emphasis)

The world according to James is diverse in its very essence. Even the term “the world” might be inappropriate, as there are, for James, in a sense many worlds. James is opposing the tendency to view the world as a unity, and to provide a universal account of its working, as there is no evident reason to presume that this “all-form” is more true than the “each-form”, which he accuses more or less the whole of Western Philosophy before him for having assumed. As the excerpts indicate, James uses the term “pluralistic” to characterize a certain ontological position, namely, that the world is multifarious and cannot be captured by a single theoretical system – at the very least not over time. This indicates that a pluralist ontology draws on two perceived aspects of the world: 1) diversity and 2) mutability. These two characteristics imply, respectively, that the world a) cannot be captured by a universal account, and b) if it *were* to be captured by a universal account at any point in time, the account would not be transferrable to other points in time.

I am mentioning James’ view as a background to understand some of the calls for pluralism. Philosophers of science, such as Longino (2002; 2006), similarly stress methodological pluralism as being a response to ontological pluralism, or, more precisely, the uncertainty as to whether the world is best captured by a single approach.²² The view resembles the open system ontologies of Sheila Dow and Tony

²² Mäki (1997) asserts “the one world principle”, and thereby excludes pluralism about the world as a feasible position. In endorsing any variant of pluralism, we must ask if we have

Lawson (the latter is associated with a specific ontological school of thought, namely critical realism). Indeed, Dow (1997: 89) starts one of her articles by providing the following definition: “Pluralism is the philosophical position that the ultimate reality of the universe consists of a plurality of entities; it is an ontological position”, and she points out that if nature is “purely” pluralistic, this leaves no room for general theorizing. Moreover, this ontological position is taken to have clear methodological implications; methodology should, somehow, be mapped onto ontology. Thus ontology is here made the starting point for methodological and epistemological considerations.

Both Dow (2008) and Lawson (2003) state that current mainstream economics is characterized by its *insistence on mathematical formalism or closed system theorizing*, and that it is therefore unable to depict (or at least grossly deficient for depicting) the nature of social reality, which is an open system. In other words, there is a mismatch between the nature of the world and the way it is approached theoretically.

What is an open system? Chick and Dow (2005: 365) invoke the dictionary definition: “*open system*, a material system in which the total mass or energy fluctuates; an incomplete or alterable system (of ideas, doctrines, things, etc.).” In the realm of economics, this is a system that changes as time passes, and there is interdependency and reciprocal feedback between agents and structure, which means that both can change endogenously in the system, there is path dependency, etc. Lawson (2003: 44) also emphasizes the mutability aspect of the world, in what he dubs *the transformational model*: “(...) change is essential to what [social processes] are, to their mode of being. They exist as processes of becoming (and decline)”. He further states that the central characteristic of the social system is that it is “dynamic

good ontological and epistemological reasons to do so, he states. In particular, he argues that there can be good reasons for theoretical pluralism, even if we uphold the one world principle, since it can be difficult to know which theory is the one that describes the one world correctly. Mäki’s merit is that he gives a tidy account of what pluralism may involve. I do not, however, see that he is justified in asserting the one world principle as a constraint. Longino (2002) is less sanguine about what Mäki calls the one world principle. Epistemic uncertainty means precisely that we do not know what the furniture of the world looks like, and whether it is ultimately better described by one theory than many. Longino therefore opts for an agnostic position as to whether the world is pluralistic in an ontological sense. In my view, this is a true pluralist standpoint, also when we speak of methodological pluralism, as we do. However, Longino nevertheless links methodological and theoretical pluralism to ontology, a link that I will challenge in the following. See Meyenburg (forthcoming) for a survey of positions on ontological pluralism within the context of economics.

and open” (Lawson, 2003: 118), where an open system is defined by the absence of event regularities.²³

Although Lawson himself does not explicitly state whether he subscribes to “a pluralistic ontology” in the above sense, he does define “ontological pluralism” – in order to distinguish it from pluralism as a normative doctrine – in the following way: “*ontological pluralism*, on one conception, designates the claim that multiple non-overlapping worlds exist (...). A second notion (...) has it that our *one* reality contains an (at least synchronically) irreducible multiplicity of constituents”²⁴ (Lawson, 2009a: 118), and the latter description seems to be in accordance with his position. Lawson thus emphasizes both the multifariousness and the mutability of the *social* world: “(...) the social world emerges as an interrelated network of dynamic totalities, or internally related processes” (Lawson, 2003: 117).²⁵ The founder of critical realism, Roy Bhaskar illuminates further:

Now the view of the world as closed sets him off in the wrong direction – for it sets him looking for a *complete description of a given field*. A view of the world as open can, on the other hand, concentrate his endeavours enormously. For it means that all he has to do is to identify and describe (...) *some interesting and significant object of inquiry*, without supposing that this will enable him to make deductively successful predictions. (Bhaskar, 2008 [1975]: 142, my emphasis)

Bhaskar is here discussing the difference between experimental and non-experimental theorists. Events can be isolated in experimental contexts, and regularities can be discovered. These then have to be transferred to reality, which is an open system,

²³ In addition, the irreducibility of the macro level to microfoundations (and vice versa, for that matter) is a prominent point for both Dow and Lawson, implying that methodological individualism is a futile principle for dealing with social nature. Structures emerge from the level of individuals, but are qualitatively different from them. Structures in turn feed back into the actions and behaviour of individuals. This is taken to require different methods of analysis for different areas of enquiry (e.g. microeconomics and macroeconomics).

²⁴ This definition is excerpted from Erlich (1986: 527), who distinguishes between three varieties of pluralism, namely *ontological pluralism*, the *epistemic-methodological* and the *volitional*.

²⁵ If there are several totalities within the totality, so to speak, we must be dealing with “each-forms” in some sense. It should be assumed that each self-sufficient entity (which is how the term “totality” must be interpreted) requires a separate investigation, and possibly a separate approach. This phrasing, however, begs the question of how something can be composed of totalities, i.e. how they can be totalities if they make up something else – cf. James’ statement above that “some of [the world] may remain outside of the largest combination of it ever made”.

where many latent forces and tendencies are at work, from which a range of different events and phenomena can emerge. This explanatory move is done by retrodiction (Bhaskar, 2008 [1975]) or retroduction (Lawson, 2003) – transcendental arguments. Closure is brought about in experiments and does not usually occur naturally, which is why one cannot justifiably claim to have discovered laws by carrying out an experiment in isolation. This transfer inescapably involves an act of faith.

Clearly, then, critical realism or – more generally – open system ontology depicts the world as diverse and mutable, which implies that one cannot isolate event regularities in the real world – neither in physical nature nor in social reality. This is seen to undermine general theorizing. To the extent that current mainstream economics is characterized by monomaniacal mathematical deductivism, which is a plausible description, this approach brings a very powerful critique of orthodoxy. Yet what are the full methodological implications of this critique, and should we necessarily follow them? Does this “pluralistic ontology” necessarily imply or warrant “methodological pluralism”? And, conversely, does the latter require the former as part of its justification? Should methodology be mapped onto ontology, whatever that means?

Ontological views do have implications for methodology, but no definite implications. There is a potential conflation of ontological and methodological points here that is not fully justified. In order to address this, we need to examine what kind of pluralism the abovementioned authors are advocating, and which reasons they have for doing so. Have they been led astray by their conception of reality?

Lawson and the beast

Lawson’s main contribution to economic methodology is his criticism of mainstream economics based on his critical realist approach. His understanding of what modern mainstream economics entails, and what sets it apart from heterodoxy is one of the best descriptions of the problem of monism.²⁶ In addition, his elaboration of a critical

²⁶ A main problem with defining orthodoxy, which Lawson also runs into, might be that it escapes definition; we know what mainstream economics is when we encounter it, but, alas, we fail to list the necessary and sufficient criteria. None of the attempts at defining mainstream or neoclassical economics are clear-cut (e.g. Arnsperger and Varoufakis, 2006; Weintraub, 2002b; Lee, 2009; Eliassen, 2016; Morgan, ed., 2016). It seems, then, that mainstream economics is like power and the elephant: hard to define, but you can be sure to recognize it when you meet it. There could be a Wittgensteinian problem here: there is a family resemblance between all things characterized as mainstream economics, which means

realist ontology is an important achievement. Yet it is not, I will argue, a foundation for pluralism. Lawson has indeed come under criticism for not being genuinely pluralist (e.g. Van Bouwel, 2004), sometimes fairly, sometimes not. In any case, his views illuminate the main contentions in the pluralism debate very well.

Lawson (2003: 27) explicitly supports pluralism: “The goal (...) is a pluralistic forum where explicitly prosecuted ontology and critical reflection can take their place amongst all the conceivable components of economics as social theorising”. In this statement, pluralism seems to entail both tolerance and ontology. He elaborates:

(...) a commitment to methodological pluralism entails not a hiding of differences but a respecting and accommodation of views and approaches alternative to one’s own (in an awareness, in particular, that all assessments are fallible). To adopt such a stance is to support an environment which allows, and even encourages, competing ideas and approaches to co-exist, albeit with the hope of mutual engagement and enrichment. (Lawson, 2003: 291-292)

Lawson acknowledges the fallibility of all viewpoints as a rationale for pluralism. This is, as indicated, the prime foundation of pluralism: epistemic uncertainty. Moreover, he explicitly acknowledges both the moral and the epistemological condition of pluralism: “a pluralistic orientation (...) is desirable, not least because it seems essential both to human flourishing in general and knowledge advance in particular” (Lawson, 2009a: 119). Yet Lawson highlights his twofold agenda: he aims at both forwarding his critical realist position and encouraging tolerance – and active encouragement – of opposing views. In other words, he is simultaneously arguing for a particular ontological approach and the proliferation of methodological approaches. Is it possible to consistently maintain both of these positions?

Let us start by taking a closer look at Lawson’s critique of the mainstream. He defines mainstream economics by its *insistence* on formalism, and heterodoxy by its (implicitly) ontologically motivated rejection of this insistence (Lawson, 2009a).

The project that has dominated the discipline of economics for the last forty years or so is one that, although highly heterogeneous in detail, and fluid in reversing its

that every instance of it resembles some other instance of it, yet there is no characteristic that all instances share. Kuhn (1996 [1970]: 43-46) highlights the same difficulty in specifying the rules of the scientific game; a paradigm might not lend itself to a definition of this sort.

manifest form, is united and stable in, *but only in*, adhering to the following single doctrine or edict. This is an insistence that mathematical methods be *more or less always employed* in the study of economic phenomena. (Lawson, 2009a: 94, second emphasis added)

(...)

(...) an oppositional stance to the noted orthodox doctrine (that formalism is *normally compulsory*) is the nominal essence of the current heterodoxy (...) (Lawson, 2009a: 94, my emphasis)

(...)

Heterodoxy *qua* heterodoxy, as I conceive it, involves a necessary opposition *not* to the use of formalism but only to *the dogmatic insistence that only these sorts of methods be used, irrespective of their ability to illuminate*. (Lawson, 2009a: 121, original emphasis)

Three things emerge from this. Firstly, it is not the use of formalistic technique in itself that is the problem according to Lawson, but the *insistence* that they be used, which leads to the exclusion of other, non-formalistic, approaches (or approaches that are not strictly formalist). Secondly, heterodoxy is defined in terms of its opposition to this insistence. Thirdly, however, this insistence is not actually all-encompassing (only “normally”, “more or less always”). So although we are approaching a definition, this begs the question of what determines when and where other approaches are legitimate. Thus Lawson does not succeed in providing exhaustive criteria for a definition of orthodoxy, if that was his aim – which it seems to be given the phrasing in the first of the above paragraphs, namely that orthodoxy is “stable in, *but only in*” adhering to this doctrine – “more or less always”.²⁷ Yet this is not a decisive counter-argument. All attempts at defining “the beast”, as Lawson calls it, run into the problem that exceptions exist, even if there must be some criteria, or some mechanism, by which the outside is separated from the inside.

²⁷ He does offer one possible suggestion for exceptions to the rule, namely that it is legitimate for already well-reputed economists to do non-formalistic work, or invite their colleagues from other fields to do the same.

More importantly, how does the definition of orthodoxy bear on pluralism? In the following passage, Lawson relates his definition of orthodoxy to the constraints on pluralism:

How does the current mainstream join the party? Clearly its *insistence* that mathematical-deductivist methods be more or less always and everywhere be used and by all of us, is ill-fitted to this pluralistic picture. (Lawson, 2009a: 125)

(...)

All that is being rejected by heterodoxy is the orthodox constraint on a pluralistic approach to economic analysis. This takes on a special significance just because the mainstream is constituted through this constraint. But if that is the nature of the beast, we just have to accept that opposing the mainstream (rejecting its constitutive doctrine) is a pro-, not an anti-, pluralistic stance. (Lawson, 2009a: 121)

“Pluralism”, in Lawson’s account, can therefore be interpreted to mean opposition to the insistence on mathematical deductivism. However, the rejection of one specific idea does not in itself suggest a lot about what else one might reject or accept. The account has two further problems with regard to pluralism. Firstly, his understanding of the constraint on pluralism is either trivial (i.e. a variation of Kuhn’s (1996 [1970]) analysis of paradigms) or too bold. Under normal paradigmatic circumstances, *methodological insistence* is the constraint on pluralism, regardless of which methodology is being insisted upon. Secondly, although Lawson acknowledges the fallibility of all assessments, he himself cannot escape restricting the scope of pluralism in seeking to ground pluralism in his own ontological views. Lawson (2010: 107) himself admits that his position is “ontologically bold” (yet “epistemologically and substantively very cautious”) and acknowledges that others might judge his position as curtailing pluralism. He does not “think it does though” (Lawson, 2010: 107), and states that one should draw on the best ontology available. Fair enough; but that still circumscribes the playing field, and the view can easily be contested.

In Lawson’s view the obstacle to pluralism is mainstream economics. And, more specifically, this is not due to the fact that a mainstream *as such* exists (i.e. a sociological explanation à la Kuhn), but it is due to the characteristics of the

theoretical school (or approach or entity) that happens to be the contemporary mainstream, which is defined by its insistence on mathematical deductivism. This is an important distinction; on this view, not only do we have a scientific paradigm, we seem to have a paradigm consisting of an approach that by its very nature leads to its practitioners becoming intolerant. In other words, Lawson seems to imply that mathematical formalism itself is what causes the intolerant insistence upon its use. Or are formalism and the insistence on formalism (which in any case is not always and everywhere) two phenomena that somewhat spuriously occur simultaneously?²⁸

The former possibility cannot be excluded.²⁹ Yet it is hard to see any necessity in this, even if there are some aspects of formalism that might, in various ways, lend it to insistence. One is that an education based on mathematical problem solving is more likely, and suited, to be one-sided. Moreover, there is authority in numbers, and, mathematics is a universal language stretching across geographical borders (Fourcade, 2006), rendering a paradigm built on mathematics a more probable candidate for extreme monism. However, this does not imply that non-mathematical scholars, or non-mainstream economists are less monist or more tolerant. My firm impression is that intolerant and insisting scholars can be found both within and without the mainstream, and the same goes for tolerant scholars, a point emphatically made by Freeman and Kliman (2006), reviewed below. While many orthodox economists are indeed hostile to heterodox ideas, others remain blithely unaware that the entity heterodox economics even exists, and others still have a curious yet open attitude towards challenging ideas, although they might not see any reason to pursue them further personally. I believe that these different attitudes reflect just as much different intellectual types as different theoretical schools, and the same differences apply within schools of thought as well. Another complicating factor is that many heterodox scholars, for example some Post Keynesians, Marxists and ecological

²⁸ He does, however, state that he has nothing against formalist endeavours per se if there is any hope they be fruitful in specific circumstances, but this is a somewhat frictional statement in the context of his general line of argument (Lawson, 2009b).

²⁹ There are two ways in which such a correlation could be formed. Either 1) all mainstream economists are intolerant intellectuals and they insist that only the established methodology should be used (this could apply regardless of what the established methodology may be), or 2) all scholars who pursue their work along the lines of mathematical deductivism are made intolerant towards other approaches by virtue of this very practice. Or, in other words, doing something specific might lead one to insisting that this and only this should be done, and, moreover, that this – for some reason – applies to mathematical-deductivist endeavours, however not to heterodox scholarship.

economists, are quite mathematical-deductive in their approach, even if Lawson (2006; 2009a; 2010) claims that they implicitly adhere to the underlying ontological vision of heterodox economics as he conceives it.

However, to the extent that we interpret “formalism” as the prioritization of form (whatever the form) above content, there is a certain link between insistence and formalism. Philosophers such as Bacon (1620), Hegel (2004 [1807]), Mill (1998 [1859]) and Husserl (1970 [1954]) have all warned against empty formalism without any insight into the matter at hand or an appreciation of the grounds of received opinion or procedure. In this sense, “formalism” can to a certain extent be used as a designator for paradigmatic science, or at least scientific discourse that has reached a standstill.

At any rate, intolerance is best viewed as a structural feature of the paradigmatic working of normal science. This is what we need to break in order to achieve pluralism, and it has got little to do with the particular orthodox creed at any given time. The dividing line between orthodoxy and heterodoxy is contingent, and so is the respective content of the two bodies of thought thus identified.³⁰

The methodological principles of different schools within the mainstream overlap with principles in heterodoxy, even though there may be some characteristics that render it possible to demarcate current heterodoxy from current orthodoxy. A definition based on contingent features of today is, however, not a definition of orthodoxy and heterodoxy *as such*. This relation must, in the first instance, be understood without reference to substantive content.

³⁰ Let us reflect upon the divide between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, by means of a thought experiment. Take New Classical and New Keynesian macroeconomists: they share certain characteristics that Postkeynesians would reject, such as rational expectations, microfoundations, equilibrium and so forth. Still, they would perceive that there are fundamental differences between them when it comes to policy recommendations. New Keynesians are closer to Postkeynesians than to New Classical economists in terms of fiscal policy. Is this divide less significant, i.e. on a lower level in the scientific hierarchy, just because it does not follow the current heterodox/orthodox divide? Now, imagine that New Classical macroeconomists and Austrian economists rule the roost. New Keynesians are in opposition (along with the current heterodoxy less the Austrians), because speaking of things such as rigidities and market imperfections is too mundane or something of the sort. How would we characterize that mainstream, and what would we do about those poor, well-meaning, New Keynesians? In the scheme of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, whatever they may be at any given time, the enemy of your enemy is your friend. Heterodoxy – *the other belief* – must be defined by virtue of its opposition to the prevailing belief, whatever that belief might be. The term has positive content beyond this, but this depends on particular circumstances at a given time.

It is not so long ago that “heterodox economics” became an established term that heterodox economists would associate themselves with, and hence the meaning of the term is associated with the actual essence (if any can be found) of heterodox economics in this time period (Davis, 2009). In a pluralist economics discipline, however, there is no heterodox economics. Nor is there orthodox economics. The terms appear because of a specific situation, i.e. a paradigm-like scientific discourse that resists methodological change at its core despite persistent empirical resistance, and it is this very situation that pluralism seeks to overcome.

Despite his explicit endorsement of tolerance pluralism, Lawson’s insistence on ontological foundations leads to a conception of pluralism that is too restrictive. Some heterodox scholars (e.g. Van Staveren, 2009) contest that heterodox opposition stems from ontology. In addition, the fallibility of the foundation means that pluralism becomes too transient; even if we all were to accept his social ontology today, what would a rejection of it tomorrow imply for pluralism?³¹

Even if all methodological and theoretical standpoints do imply ontological views, Lawson has not given a solid grounding of the *primacy* of ontology. Vromen supports this point:

I conclude that [ontology] cannot play the adjudicating role that Lawson imputes to it. One of the reasons for Lawson to argue for the primacy of ontology is that “all methods, frameworks and points of view carry ontological presuppositions”. This

³¹ A possible interpretation of Lawson’s position is that it is a strategic, yet constructive, means to achieve pluralism. De Langhe (2009) argues, in a reply to the allegations of Sent (2003) and Davis (1997) against (amongst others) Lawson, that the latter’s simultaneous advocacy for heterodox economics and pluralism is not self-contradictory. The argument to the contrary rests on the false premise that “paradigm warriors” are necessarily monists. However, De Langhe argues, paradigm warriors can also be pluralists; and the legitimate strategy to antagonize mainstream economics stems from an acknowledgement that there is an asymmetry of power between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. I think this line of argument uncovers the important point that one cannot play the game of free exchange of ideas if this exchange is not facilitated institutionally. It helps in pointing to the *institutional* deficiencies of mainstream economics, and thereby approaches the heart of the matter, as we will see later. Nevertheless, a fully antagonistic position, which would seem to recommend that the current orthodoxy as a whole should be overthrown, is so radical, not to speak of the difficulty of achieving this, that it seems folly to resort to such a position until other paths have been tried. It involves antagonizing all mainstream economists that want to stick with their ways. It is of course possible that such a strategy might work rhetorically, in shifting the centre of gravity of the debate in the direction of questioning the usefulness of current formalist techniques, and in this way perhaps paving the way for other approaches – but this also involves the prospect of not being listened to at all. At any rate, it is not my aim to enter further into such strategic considerations.

arguably is true. But what follows from it? Lawson seems to infer from this that in assessing existing theories and in constructing new ones we'd better start with ontology, rather than with methodology and epistemology. (Vromen, 2009: 331)

Thus Lawson is too ambitious in wanting to unite the whole of heterodoxy under his social ontology banner. Yet there is something extremely important in his observation that modern mainstream economics suffers from a detachment from reality. The solution to this, however, cannot be to prescribe a specific ontology, as this assumes a measure of infallibility at the outset. However, I do think that demanding *ontological commitment*, in a minimal sense, is consonant with pluralism, if it is taken to mean reasonable methodological response to obvious empirical failure. A scientific discourse, in which major anomalies do not lead to a significant methodological overhaul, is flawed.

In line with this, Vromen (2009) states that it is not true that mainstream economists do not care about ontology or identifying underlying causal mechanisms. He suggests that Lawson is really demanding a shift in scientific criteria of evaluation from simplicity, tractability, etc., to values such as realisticness and plausibility. These are values that always vary between schools of thought, and can thus not be neutrally adjudicated on.

The struggle for pluralism and the struggle for recognition of one's own particular ideas (such as open system ontology) are two separate causes that can be pursued simultaneously, and the former is indeed conducive to the latter. However, we cannot legislate methodology for the whole discipline of economics, even if this is done by cautious imposition of ontological restrictions. One of the rationales of pluralism is that we do not know how to demarcate science, based on critical realism or other restrictive criteria, because we cannot anticipate its future development.

Thus it seems so far that ontology is an inappropriate starting point for the pluralist doctrine. Nor should the doctrine be grounded in contingent facts of today (if these are indeed rightly depicted). However, Lawson is not the only advocate of pluralism who relies on the nature of the real world for the conception and justification of pluralism.

Isomorphism?

Chick and Dow (2005) agree with Lawson that an open system ontology should be matched by an open system methodology and open system theoretical systems. They do, however, allow for some closed system modelling within an open system methodology. They assert that as long as the theoretical system accommodates the openness of social reality, there is room for event regularities in theoretical work and provisional closure of economic models. Crucially, models are here regarded as being subordinate to theory. An openness at the theoretical level, keeping the factors of the closed model that are subject to change, “at the back of one’s head” (Chick and Dow, 2005: 369) enables theorists to adapt the choice of model to the changing subject matter. What sets their own view apart from the mainstream view is that the latter seems to equate models with theory and hence operates with closed theoretical systems. In consequence, they take a more moderate stance than Lawson, who does not see much promise for such theorizing at all, given the absence of event regularities in the real world for most practical purposes. Yet they do prescribe an open system ontology as a constraint for economic theorizing.

Chick and Dow (2005) carefully discuss the meaning of “open systems”. An *open* system is, naturally, one that is not *closed*. The conditions for a closed system are, however, strict: all relevant variables can be identified, the boundaries are definite and immutable, only the specified exogenous variables influence the system (in a known way), the agents are atomistic and the whole system functions deterministically, or at least stochastically (Chick and Dow, 2005: 367). As a result, a system that does not fulfil all of these conditions is open, but the *degree* of openness will depend on how many of and to what extent these conditions are broken. A crucial component in their understanding is *system*, which is different from *chaos*, and means that we are faced with an organized totality, the parts of which are interdependent. Importantly, they assert that a system has boundaries. The boundaries are subject to change, yet it is precisely the property of boundaries that allow for provisional closure of models and the use of the *ceteris paribus* clause.

Chick and Dow (2005) submit that mainstream economists are pragmatic, and underscore that everyone abstracts from aspects of reality; however, there seems to be

a lack of interest in reality in orthodox economics.³² It seems, then, that they might want to preserve a role for orthodox economics in their vision of the discipline, so long as orthodox economists become more preoccupied with reality. This creates a tension to the extent that the perceived lack of interest in reality is a necessary characteristic of orthodox economics. To evaluate the authors' position, it is important to note their emphasis of the need for mapping methodology and/or epistemology onto reality: "We (...) agree that the primary focus should be on ontology, from which our approach to pursuing knowledge follows" (Chick and Dow, 2005: 376). This mapping cannot be understood as a straightforward "mirror of nature", which is the position of Lawson that they seek to avoid, as it overly restricts the scope for theorizing. At any rate, a demand for *isomorphism* between methodology and ontology is commonsensical to the extent that it means commitment to reality, but this can be interpreted in many ways. The minimal requirement of Aristotle (quoted at the start of this chapter) that we must "look for precision in each inquiry just to the extent that the nature of the subject allows it" allows for judgment on the appropriate extent. At any rate, this request for isomorphism – in one form or another – starting from ontology, has left its traces in Sheila Dow's arguments for pluralism.

Dow, schools of thought and ontology

Sheila Dow (2004; 2008; 2009), like Lawson, sees the defining feature of mainstream (or orthodox) economics as its insistence upon formalism. Dow (2008) does, however, distinguish between monist formalism at the methodological level (the use of only one method: mathematical formalism) and monism at the meta-methodological level, "not contemplating alternative methodological approaches" (Dow, 2008: 74), i.e. the insistence on only this method being used. In her view, orthodox economics is monist on both levels. Lawson, however, is monist at the meta-methodological level: he is arguing for a pluralist methodology, hence precluding any monist methodologies, such as current orthodox economics (with some heterodox economics as collateral damage). It is the monism on the meta-methodological level, in Dow's scheme, that we need to combat.³³ In this way, she

³² "In actual fact, this question of mapping onto reality does not seem to be of much importance within the mainstream" (Chick and Dow, 2005: 375).

³³ Moreover, Dow points out that there is *theoretical* pluralism within mainstream economics according to the scope provided by the single methodology, a fact that often leads to

ingeniously resolves Lawson's entanglement of mathematical deductivism and the insistence upon it. They are separate matters that belong at different levels in the structure of scientific reasoning. This unlocks Ivan's paradox.

The calls for pluralism are generally understood as calls for proliferation of schools of thought. Dow (1997; 2004), however, perceives a danger of the agenda degenerating into "pure pluralism", which cannot provide any prescriptive content and hence opens the door for methodological anarchism. In order to rectify this, she (throughout her work) seeks a double grounding of pluralism in *ontology* and in Kuhn's notion of scientific *paradigms* – thereby providing some *structure* to pluralism. I will problematize three aspects of Dow's work on pluralism, namely the primacy of ontology, the reference to paradigms in the grounding of pluralism and the linking of epistemic uncertainty to open system ontology.

(1) Dow (2008: 88) states that "methodology follows from ontology". Furthermore, Dow (2004: 276) claims that our words and terms are rooted in our ontology. In other words, ontological reasoning is the foundation of Dow's analysis of epistemology and methodology. How does that bear on her view on pluralism?

Following Screpanti (1997), Dow (2004) distinguishes between pluralism as an ethical principle and pluralism that is epistemologically grounded. Dow (2008: 81) informs this distinction by listing four arguments for pluralism, of which the latter three are variations of the epistemological argument: a) pluralism is the ethical argument for tolerance of different approaches; b) no mechanism exists for unifying knowledge about reality, so we need to acknowledge the fact of pluralism, i.e. that a plurality of legitimate approaches exist;³⁴ c) by Darwinist analogy, pluralism makes the discipline more robust (e.g. to financial crises), since the subject matter is evolving, by drawing on a variety of perspectives; d) the pluralism of the world, the open system ontology, requires an open system methodology. The latter argument is the most prominent in Dow's justification of pluralism.

It is a requirement of pluralism that no approach is excluded *a priori*. This is in line with the first and possibly the second and third argument above, and Dow seems to share this outlook. Even if this is not contradictory, it is puzzling: if Dow seeks to ground pluralism in open system ontology (fourth argument), how can she at

confusion in discussions between heterodox and orthodox economists about lack of pluralism in the discipline.

³⁴ Dow (2008) associates this position with insights in the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge.

the same time want to include in this pluralist discipline an approach (current mainstream economics) that implies a closed system ontology? I suggest that Dow's persistent emphasis on ontology – even if it does not hamper the cause – might cloud the matter of pluralism, and does not help in forwarding it.³⁵ To support this, I will assess her arguments closely.

Starting from the ethical principle, Dow is concerned with the *relativism* that could be associated with this:

[T]here is a danger of logical contradiction, that the argument for methodological pluralism itself denies any general basis for such an overarching argument. There is the danger, in other words, that truly generalized methodological pluralism actually erodes any basis for discourse. (Dow, 2004: 281-282)

Dow seeks to guard the discipline against methodological anarchism. She is motivated by concerns about “anything goes”. This is a common worry among heterodox economists, and therefore an important point to dwell on. Dow (1997) associates “pure” ontological pluralism with postmodern anti-methodologists, who fail to provide assertive methodological prescriptions, and concludes that “pure ontological pluralism and its implications are untenable” (Dow, 1997: 91). Dow (2004: 280) is concerned about the rise of “unbridled methodological pluralism”. She thinks mainstream economists may exploit the insights of Kuhn, where paradigms are seen as methodologically insulated, in order to fend off heterodox criticism. “Methodological pluralism in this sense is understood as removing any need for reasoned justification” (Dow, 2004: 280).

The suggested solution against this pure pluralism is “modified pluralism” (Dow, 1997) or “structured pluralism” (Dow, 2004), which rests on an open system, *structured*, conception of social reality. The lack of structure in the calls for pluralism is due to a lack of ontological foundations: “an understanding of what is entailed by methodological pluralism and pluralism of method has been hampered by lack of reference to epistemological and ontological foundations” (Dow, 1997: 89). Dow claims that methodological pluralism (in Caldwell's (1988) formulation) “lacks force

³⁵ Moreover, the position implies an unviable strategy for persuasion. Orthodox economists are unresponsive to arguments pointing out the discrepancy between their methodology and commonplace ontological observations, as this type of realisticness is not an effective evaluation criterion in the mainstream discourse.

because of its lack of epistemic and ontological foundations”, and that it is “untenable as a basis for knowledge” (Dow, 1997: 96-97). The rest of her authorship on pluralism might be seen as an attempt to lend force to this creed, and render it a basis for knowledge. She seeks to provide a justification of pluralism, grounded in ontology, that has some assertive prescriptive implications. The resulting doctrine draws on an open system view of reality, while she still seeks to combine the ethical principle and an epistemologically grounded pluralism.

Does it require some limitation in order to be workable, and if so, what is the basis for limitation? The case is made here for what is termed ‘structural [sic] pluralism’. This approach is outlined with reference to thinking on open systems. (Dow, 2004: 276)

Dow thinks that the methodologist needs to draw up a limit for pluralism, and this boundary is determined by reference to a) open system ontology and b) to Thomas Kuhn’s work on scientific paradigms. Let me provide some evaluation of the former before moving on to the latter.

It is not clear why Dow denotes the postmodernist position in ontological terms. The downgrading of the importance of ontology, or the assertion that ontology (at least in the metaphysical sense) is a futile endeavour, is only a problem if one presupposes the primacy of ontology.³⁶ Nor is it clear that our words and concepts are rooted in ontology. This could, for example, be turned around to the claim that our ontology derives from our words and terms, that ontological discourse is a particular kind of language game (Wittgenstein, 2003 [1953]), in which conceptions of ontological entities arise from the “grammar” of language. The point here is not that Dow is wrong, but that the statement can easily be contested. Ontology is a ramshackle, not a firm, foundation. Methodological pluralism does not require it.

Bruce Caldwell (1988) claims that epistemic uncertainty does not mean that *scientists* do not have a basis for knowledge, only that the *methodologist* cannot deliver such a basis. Yet Dow wants the methodologist to be able to make such prescriptions. I contend that it is prerequisite that the methodologist does not unduly

³⁶ Is Dow using the tacit premise that since pluralism originally is an ontological doctrine (James, 1909; Longino, 2002), this warrants that pluralism at other levels need to refer to this ontological level?

circumscribe the discursive playing field. Moreover, experience indicates that ontology creates unnecessary arguments between pluralists, as seen in the review of Lawson's arguments above. We should do without it if we can.

Moreover, the fear of anything goes is unfounded and the anarchistic position has been misinterpreted. Dow's association of mainstream immunization from criticism with "unbridled methodological pluralism" is a misleading conceptualization; such practice has got nothing to do with pluralism. Methodological anarchism is a constructive position, and it is not incompatible with design of institutions that guarantee the soundness of discourse, as long as these do not unduly interfere with it. Certainly Paul Feyerabend, who famously, yet polemically, coined the phrase "anything goes", does not argue against standards.³⁷ This does, of course, not mean that it is inconceivable that a situation free of standards will arise.³⁸ Yet this "anything goes" in the sense of absence of standards is not what we are faced with in modern mainstream economics. There is no clear evidence of orthodox economists using incommensurability as a justification for fending off heterodoxy; most orthodox economists simply believe that their approach is objectively superior. The problem is rather that the standards in operation are not very conducive to heterodox economics (nor to pluralism, as we will see). Ontology is, however, not the answer to the question of supporting structures for discourse. The problem has been inadequately specified.

(2) Now to the second element in Dow's justification of the structuring of pluralism: the Kuhnian analysis. Dow uses the term "schools of thought" to distinguish between methodologically incommensurate scientific approaches. It is an empirical fact that a range of schools of thought exists, and that they each to some extent conduct their own knowledge production and ratification. Dow claims that the schools preserve unique knowledge within their scientific communities and that these should therefore be harnessed: "the functioning of science requires paradigms, or schools of thought" (Dow, 2004: 288). The harnessing of knowledge within schools of thought is motivated by Kuhn's view of paradigm communities as fruitful vehicles for scientific puzzle solving. Moreover, Kuhn's work does indeed demonstrate the problems of access to reality; there is no neutral or objective way in which we can

³⁷ I will return to this in the next chapter.

³⁸ When Feyerabend came to realize the unfortunate connotations to anarchism, he adopted the term "Dadaism" to denote his position (Hacking, 2010: xiii-xiv).

obtain knowledge of the world. Scientific knowledge is bound to be – if not trapped in, then largely shaped by – preconceptions given by the paradigm. We have to do our best to advance science given these constraints.

[S]cientists cannot all be engaged in extraordinary science all of the time, knowledge generally progresses by pursuing research within paradigms where there is a shared understanding, particularly of what constitutes a good argument. Schools of thought thus perform a positive role in the sociology of knowledge. To recognise this would be to adopt a pluralist meta-methodology in its fullest sense. (Dow, 2008: 87)

Since schools of thought are distinguished in terms of methodology, in Dow's view,³⁹ they cannot be neutrally evaluated and should all have equal access to economic discourse (Dow, 2004: 281). This is the "ethical principle" for pluralism, the tolerance argument. Yet Dow sees the ethical principle as having inhibited methodological prescription, e.g. in McCloskey's (1994) rhetorical approach, and thus in need of supplementation.

Caldwell (1997) notes that Dow (1997) advocates restraint on pluralism (in linking it to Postkeynesian theory), yet states that the important constraint should be "criticism". Dow (2004: 279), reading Kuhn, points out that criticism is always conducted from a paradigm. At least it always arises from a certain perspective. This is an important point: scientific evaluation always invokes school of thought-specific criteria of judgment. According to Dow, schools are to a certain extent incommensurable, and this fact can be abused to discard criticism, since it is ultimately cast from a different methodological viewpoint and hence is not relevant from the alternative perspective. However, Dow claims that incommensurability is not sufficient to preclude discussion across paradigmatic borders: "There is some common ground for discourse, and not just over pluralism. It is of crucial importance

³⁹ E.g. Negru (2013: 987) challenges this definition and suggests that a school of thought refers to both a "system of thought" and its "member practitioners", but she also stresses homogeneity of methodology, ontology and epistemology. (She then states that schools of thought can comprise of several paradigms, and thereby loses touch with conventional usage). However, even if the details in Negru's analysis can be disputed, I agree with her overall judgment that "[s]chools of thought represent flexible, evolving entities or forms with diffuse boundaries that play a useful role in economics as they embody a place of dialogue and debate among [their] members" (Negru, 2013: 1003).

therefore, in trying to understand what is entailed by pluralism, to discuss its structure” (Dow, 2004: 282).

This is a pertinent observation: there is common ground for discourse between economists of different schools. Yet Dow does not fully address what this commonality consists of. We should indeed discuss the structure of pluralism, but not legislate for it – which Dow seems to do, however carefully, by pointing to the *structure* of current schools of thought as providing guidance for the *structure* that should be prescribed by a doctrine of pluralism:

Given the requirements of social organization, and the requirement in particular for effective communication within paradigms, there is a practical limit to the number of paradigms which may be extant at any one time, so that the pluralism represented by schools of thought is structured. (Dow, 2004: 285)

The *de facto* range of schools should of course be tolerated. Beyond that, however, this fact does not warrant any further prescription, yet Dow seems to prescribe a certain structure based on this. In Dow’s scheme, the existing schools of thought in some sense represent the structure of the economics discipline. In the same way that the real world is “structured” on an open system view, the landscape of economic science is “structured” in its dealing with different segments of this reality:

Going back to the ontological foundations for methodological pluralism, the structuring of social reality (and the language which plays an important part in that reality) suggests a structuring also at the epistemological level. Structured pluralism, then, is the advocacy of a range of methodological approaches to economics which, like the range of social structures, is not infinite. The structure is provisional; schools of thought change, not least because of their interactions with each other, as well as with the subject matter. (Dow, 2004: 287-288)

Again we see the mapping presumption, of isomorphism between ontology and methodology/epistemology.⁴⁰ It is not clear exactly how this equality is ensured. What is, for example, the precise meaning of “structuring at the epistemological level”? Is the equality of “structure” at the different levels mainly an equality of words? Dow

⁴⁰ As against this observation, Dow (1997) stated that different constellations between open and closed system ontology and methodology are conceivable.

acknowledges that any structure is provisional as the landscape of schools of thought changes as knowledge progresses. For Dow, however, this seems to call for updating the prescription of structure accordingly. Yet it is not clear why prescription of a structure is necessary if this indeed naturally arises from a properly working scientific discourse.⁴¹

The problem might be that Dow's argument is based on the assumption that Kuhn's account of the working of science is true, and more specifically that Dow's interpretation of him is correct, both of which are contestable. Feyerabend (1970) criticizes Kuhn for conflating the descriptive and normative modes: science advances through sequences of normal science and scientific revolutions, hence normal science should be encouraged since it leads to scientific revolutions.⁴² In seemingly prescribing future structure based on current structure, Dow may have similarly conflated description and prescription. Marqués and Weisman (2010) have argued quite forcefully that Kuhn's incommensurability thesis and account of normal science is an ill-fitting starting point for pluralism, since it describes cross-paradigmatic communication as very difficult, and even when it is possible, there are no apparent benefits. Even if Kuhn's analysis supports claims that no optimal epistemology can be found, he does not provide any positive reasons for pluralism. Most importantly, nothing in his analysis lends support to the pluralist ethos "denoting an open-minded attitude and a full disposition to interact with other perspectives" (Marqués and Weisman, 2010: 84).

Are paradigm communities purposeful in terms of teaching their members tools for truth-pursuit? The following comment from Karl Popper suggests otherwise:

I believe, and so do many others, that all teaching on the University level (...) should be training and encouragement in critical thinking. The 'normal' scientist, as described by Kuhn, has been badly taught. He has been taught in a dogmatic spirit: he is a victim of indoctrination. He has learned a technique which can be applied without asking for the reason why. (Popper, 1970: 52-53)

⁴¹ The structure of the discipline, the landscape of schools of thought, is, in my view, an *a posteriori* and not an *a priori* matter.

⁴² Kuhn (1970: 237) replies to this by stating: "If I have a theory of how and why science works, it must necessarily have implications for the way in which scientists should behave if their enterprise is to flourish." The main contentious issue is whether or not a pattern of normal science can be broken.

The relevance of this comment rests on whether or not normal science is inescapable, which would necessarily limit the possible range of critical thinking. Yet Kuhn's analysis must be stretched far before this resembles what pluralism should entail. There is no clear evidence that the social sciences need to operate in a paradigm-like manner, and that we therefore need to include the paradigmatic working of science as a premise in the justification of pluralism. Nevertheless, it may be true that paradigms do equip researchers with the means to bring theories to their full fruition; Feyerabend (2010) grapples with this point, in trying to facilitate both the single-mindedness required to elaborate on theories and the capacity to be critical of them and invent new ones. This is no easy task.

Dow makes the following concluding inference:

No matter how much of a genius, no individual can persuade others to accept new ideas without some common ground of understanding, some scope for making a connection with the audience (...) In other words, the functioning of science requires paradigms, or schools of thought. (Dow, 2004: 288)

The former point, that there is common ground, does not imply that this common ground is methodology. Schools of thought are not solely determined by methodology, but by their social and institutional dimension – they share venues such as conferences and journals, and this is where scientific knowledge is ratified. They also share methodological standards, but it is important to stress their mutability; a part of scientific change is the changing of methodological values. If we seek to justify “structured” pluralism with reference to the landscape of schools of thought today, the prescribed pluralism will have a conservative bias. It nurtures the existing differences and the flourishing of these approaches, but it does not actively encourage the invention of new approaches and ideas.

One problem, then, is whether or not Dow and Kuhn are descriptively correct regarding the workings of science. An additional, and more severe, problem is to what extent Kuhn's normal science and incommensurability are conducive to pluralism at all, even in Dow's modified version. Of course, if the description is correct (with necessity, not only contingently), then we do indeed have a great challenge in achieving pluralism, but we should not use Kuhn's analysis as the starting point if we do not have to. Even if it is correct that different schools of thought can be

demarcated in terms of methodology, it is already clear that the Kuhnian fundament can be contested; the justification of pluralism must rest on the firmest and most uncontroversial foundation possible in order to give pluralism the highest possible level of generality.

We need to look at pluralism as the advocacy of plurality *in the process*, as a mode of scientific practice, and not as prescribing a plurality *in the outcome*. Pluralism means that all ideas have an equal chance of making the grade, not that all ideas have the same right to prevalence; the process must be ensured, but the outcome cannot be regulated.⁴³ The methodological anarchism, or Dadaism, of Feyerabend is concerned with creating an equal footing for all scientific approaches; it does not have any implications regarding the outcome – precisely because this is not a matter to be determined by methodologists.⁴⁴

The lack of meta-criteria for choice, from which pluralism draws life, does not mean lack of criteria, or lack of reason. *Pluralism* cannot be constrained. *Practice* can be constrained, and always is, by practitioners. *Pluralism* should ensure the basic entitlements for all scientists/economists to pursue truth through their research interests and equip them to do so. The actual direction of research is determined within discourse, it cannot be prescribed in any way, e.g. by reference to ontology. However, it is necessary, which I think is the problem Dow has identified, to make sure that discourse is working properly, and this naturally invokes the institutions of the discipline – the *dialogical structure*. The problem is how we judge the productive role of schools of thought, understood as Kuhnian paradigms. The question is to some extent empirical. Yet I will argue in this thesis that we should look at the social dimension of science as being primarily a sphere of interaction, rather than a disciplining paradigm that rather strictly enforces the scientific procedure upon its members.

(3) Dow furthermore links epistemic uncertainty, the primary foundation of pluralism, to open system ontology. Dow (2004: 283) submits that “knowledge is in general held with uncertainty”, and traces this epistemic uncertainty to the nature of the subject matter. However, she explains and uses this point in a curious way. She

⁴³ This will be subject to some provisos in the following, i.e. that alternatives are continuously encouraged, that the outcome(s) are permanently subject to revision, and that plurality is prerequisite in teaching.

⁴⁴ I will elaborate on this in the next chapter when dealing with Feyerabend.

introduces a distinction between social and natural science, claiming that it is *specifically* the nature of the subject matter of social science that leads to epistemic uncertainty, as it involves human knowledge: “Were it defensible, a monist approach would be more satisfactory. The explanation must refer to the nature of the subject matter, which in the case of any social science includes human knowledge” (Dow, 2004: 282).

Firstly, it is not obvious that the explanation needs to refer to the nature of the subject matter; it might as well refer to the nature of knowledge. Yet more problematic is that it seems, on Dow’s account, that monism would be preferable to pluralism if the nature of the subject matter were different. Does this mean that she thinks monism is defensible in the natural sciences, e.g. because event regularities are more likely to occur? If so, our conceptions of pluralism differ quite substantially. The justification of pluralism should not rely on the subject matter; pluralism applies to natural science as well as social science (Giere, 2006). “Human knowledge” is and has always been uncertain in all realms.

Dow’s premise that methodological and epistemological pluralism need ontological foundations seems at this point to have led to a faulty conclusion:

The argument for methodological pluralism is that, if certain knowledge about reality is not in general possible, that is, knowledge is in general held with uncertainty, then there is no basis for identifying one best way of building knowledge (...). It must therefore be the case that this subject matter is not such as to yield law-like behaviour and definitive theories and methods to capture causal mechanisms or their manifestations. (Dow, 2004: 283)

The second sentence above does not follow from the first. No further ontological properties can be inferred from the fact of epistemic uncertainty. A closed system does not yield certain knowledge, even if the knowledge we have in the natural sciences appears (empirically) to provide more stable predictors of events and lend itself more readily to general theorizing, than knowledge that involves human behaviour. Social and natural science are both subject to fallible assessments. “No one epistemology can be conclusively shown to be superior to all others in trying to establish reasoned conclusions about an open-system reality” (Dow, 2004: 283). Indeed. And this applies to closed systems as well; superiority cannot, ultimately, be

demonstrated for any approach. Diversity should be encouraged precisely because knowledge is not certain, which it never is. This, moreover, is good news for the case for pluralism, as one does not have to engage mainstream economists in subtle ontological debates in order to bring home its benefits.

The spirit of pluralism

Dow has contributed richly to the discourse on pluralism in economics. If we take issue with some of her conclusions, this is because some of the premises of her argument are open to challenge. The spirit of pluralism is well preserved by Dow's important distinction between the meta-methodological and the methodological level. When we argue for pluralism at the meta-methodological level, we need to abstract from our own particular approach. Thus Dow (2008) observes, against Holcombe's (2008) assertions to the contrary, that taking a stance does not imply excluding other methodological perspectives. Dow (2008) states that we each need to take our own stance, acknowledging the multiplicity of approaches, and tolerate that others speak other languages. This points to nurturing the ability to take such stances and appreciate the multiplicity of values through the training of economists as a key requirement for pluralism to be effective, which I will return to in chapter 6.⁴⁵

Although Dow makes the useful distinction of the levels of pluralism, she does not seem to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion for why we are kept in this predicament, in which mainstream economics can insist on formalism and disregard everyone else without argument (assuming that this is a correct assessment). Dow stresses the need for ontology, and that epistemology follows from ontology. However, the lack of ontological commitment in economics is not remedied by pointing to the need for ontological reasoning and demanding more of it. Rather, we need to analyse the workings of the economic discourse and identify where it has gone wrong: what has allowed economics this prolonged ontological detachment and methodological inertia in an economic world that presents it with persistent empirical anomalies?⁴⁶

Ultimately, Dow's attempts both to determine the scope of pluralism based on

⁴⁵ Dow (2009) has also made significant contributions on this issue.

⁴⁶ We should note that many mainstream economists naturally regard their scientific programme as empirically successful. Indeed, it is often claimed that it has become increasingly empirical and less theoretical, and hence more relevant.

empirical observations of current schools of thought and to found this “structuring” on ontological (leading to epistemological) grounds, as well as distinguishing between knowledge pertaining to social and natural science, respectively, do not succeed. Dow’s Kuhnian position inevitably advocates a “guided”, as opposed to an “open” exchange, however gentle the guiding hand.⁴⁷

An over-reliance on Kuhn’s analysis runs the danger of over-emphasizing the fruits of following the paradigm and gives a too conservative bias; it does not sufficiently appreciate the need for confrontation with alternatives – even within a paradigm or school of thought. I will argue for the need, not only to tolerate but also to actively encourage other approaches than our own preferred one.

The ontological view: summary and challenges

A main challenge for the calls for pluralism has been the allegations that these are “strategic” (Sent, 2003), i.e. that pluralism is used as a means to achieve heterodox domination. Holcombe (2008) has asserted that heterodox economists are anti-pluralist because they favour their own approach. Although Dow (2008) has shown that this is not incoherent practice, the possibility remains that (any part of) heterodox economics is not as pluralist as it claims. Our justification of pluralism therefore has to exclude the possibility of this interpretation in order to safeguard its implementation. I contend that the ontological view stands in the way of this. When it comes to Lawson, his ultimate, strategic, aim might not be that covert. Dow seeks to overcome this problem but is not entirely successful.

We have seen that both Dow and Lawson justify pluralism by referring to the nature of the subject matter, and that they both advocate some restriction on the scope of the doctrine. Firstly, they argue that methodology has to accord with ontology; a pluralistic or open-system ontology (the world is diverse and changing) requires methodological pluralism and open-system theorizing. In other words, there is a mapping presumption, i.e. that methodology has to somehow mirror ontology.⁴⁸ Moreover, they associate the current mainstream with monism. In particular, Lawson defines mainstream economics in terms of its alleged *insistence* that only mathematical deductivism be used, and in thereby identifying current mainstream

⁴⁷ I will return to this in chapter 3.

⁴⁸ Drawing on Richard Rorty, Salanti (1997: 5) invokes “philosophy as the mirror of nature” to describe these views.

economics as the constraint on pluralism, he excludes the current mainstream from the pluralist party. As a result, pluralism is associated with current heterodox economics. Dow, however, separates closed-system theorizing from the insistence upon it, so that the mainstream as such is not defined as anti-pluralistic, but this makes her grounding of pluralism in open system ontology confusing.

It seems that a supporter of the ontological view as a justification for pluralism needs to accept at least the first two of the following premises, whereas the third is also involved (most notably in Lawson's position):

- 1) *Accept an open system ontology as superior to a closed system ontology.* This seems a sound position. Yet even if one is inclined to adopt it, this is a secondary concern that lies on a level below the question of pluralism. It pertains to what an individual or a group of economists might believe for purposes of their own scientific activities. In addition, as a practical matter, one can hardly expect that the bulk of mainstream economists would agree on this, or, as a minimum, accept the relevance of the assertion.
- 2) *Accept the primacy of ontology in methodological and epistemological matters.* This means accepting that ontology should lay the foundation for pluralism. An open system ontology is a contingent and fallible starting point, and hence the doctrine of pluralism unnecessarily loses generality by circumscribing the potential reach of the pluralist doctrine. The same applies to any ontological foundation. Yet even if one agrees that ontology should regulate epistemology and methodology, it is not clear in which way it should do so. This is revealed in the differences between Lawson and Dow, where the former more or less dismisses all mathematical formalism, whereas the latter allows provisional theoretical closure (and these two scholars are in relative agreement compared to most others).
- 3) *Accept the dividing line between current orthodoxy and heterodoxy as one of insistence on closed-system theorizing versus the rejection of this.* It is, however, not obvious that all heterodox economists are open system theorists. Moreover, the link between closed system theorizing and the *insistence* on closed system theorizing is not clear. There is not sufficient support for the claim that it is the specific nature of the current paradigm that constrains pluralism, rather than the fact that there is a paradigm in the first place.

It is, indeed, hard to disagree with the statement that the world is diverse, changing, uncertain and so on. However, the same applies to the notion that the way we perceive the world (through ontology) is liable to change and likely to do so. However, it may be that the statement that the social world is an open system is trivial; yet then it may also be redundant.

The notion that there is a discrepancy between deterministic economic models and the social world with all its complexity and uncertainty makes sense intuitively. And, indeed, many have claimed that the obsession with equilibrium modelling caused mainstream economists to neglect the coming of the financial crisis and left them perplexed after the fact when explanations were called for (Eliassen, 2016). One is therefore easily led to the conclusion that mainstream economic theories are unrealistic, the map does not fit the territory, etc. In some sense, and according to common sense, this is true: dominant mainstream theories do not accord with the bare facts before us in many important respects.

Unrealistic assumptions are normally justified by economists on the grounds of simplification, that it is necessary to abstract from the complexity of the world in order to be able to say something useful at all, and with appeal to instrumentalism, the need for simplicity and exactness, tractability, etc. No one would disagree that there is a degree of unrealisticness in standard assumptions of economics; there is only disagreement on the merits of the typical procedure.

Some authors claim that this *unrealisticness* must be remedied by the means of *realism*, in the ontological sense: the methods of economics must be adjusted to the perceived nature of the real economic world. Thus the ontological argument for pluralism runs: The world is an open system – diverse and changing, hence we need a diversity of methods that accord with it: pluralism. As a consequence we have meta-ontological monism insisting on a pluralistic ontology and methodological pluralism.⁴⁹

I am arguing that we do not have sufficient grounds for such claims and, furthermore, that basing our methodological agenda on them would be misguided.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Davidsen (2009: 44) similarly states: “The aspirations of the current critical realist project within economics then tend to be directed towards establishing a pluralistic discourse at the level of economic theory and methodology based upon a critical realist monist understanding of reality.”

⁵⁰ Maybe this could be seen as being led astray by the language game of the dominant discourse. It is presupposing a “modernist” conception of science (McCloskey, 1994). It is

Longino (2002: 141) supports my view: “[P]hilosophers may use metaphysical assumptions implicitly in their development of a general epistemology. This is (...) a flaw in such accounts, because it requires an argument for the metaphysics as part of the support of the epistemology.” It is not clear to me why ontology should have primacy. I do not say that ontology is unimportant; I am merely saying that we cannot demarcate science on ontological grounds and call this pluralism.⁵¹

As a result of the ontological enterprise, pluralism is being over-associated with heterodoxy. In addition, it is not clear that all of heterodoxy is consonant with open system theorizing, or with pluralism. The association of pluralism with current heterodoxy fails to acknowledge the transient nature of heterodox theories on the historical ladder of knowledge advancement, however true they may currently appear to us. Pluralism is both a means for truth seeking (an epistemological principle) and an ethical principle. Pluralism should be understood as the cause that will (probably) have the flourishing of open system theorizing as its effect – not the other way around. The doctrine of pluralism has to be *prior to* the content of scientific enterprise and questions regarding its ontological implications or presuppositions.

However, *insisting* on open system ontology almost always and everywhere is unlikely to bear fruits. Bjørn-Ivar Davidsen explains, like Vromen above, that the ontological view simply invokes different criteria of evaluation and that “ontology seems to be a far cry from what occupies the minds of most mainstream economists” (Davidsen, 2009: 44). If this is true, then insisting on a change of ontology or ontological reflection will not bring about substantial change in the foreseeable future. Although open system thinking might be of some aid in the process of persuasion, the struggle for pluralism cannot draw upon this as its primary weapon.

pointing out the failure of mainstream economics to live up to its own rationalist, scientific standards. However, it should be acknowledged that these standards are unattainable. The much needed reality check is not there for the taking. Mainstream economics has not accepted the consequences of the demise of positivism – or modernism – but neither have many heterodox critics (McCloskey, 1994).

⁵¹ Bigo and Negru (2008) seek to develop a moderate stance within the “ontological turn” of authors such as Lawson, Dow and Mäki, coining the term “ontologically reflexive pluralism”. Bigo and Negru correctly note that theorizing always carries ontological implications, and argue that these should be brought to light and compared in order to achieve greater integration of perspectives. I am not sure about the need for the latter (although this may be the result of a sound discourse for exchanging ideas, which is the aim of pluralism on my view). Moreover, they still presuppose the primacy of ontology and align it with Dow’s “structured pluralism”, although they state that no ontological viewpoint can be given priority, and thereby come closer to fulfilling the ethical condition of pluralism than Lawson or Dow.

Lawson's (in particular, but also Dow's) identification of heterodox economics with open system ontology means that pluralism – which should be stable and lasting – is raised on contingent and fallible principles. In the course of the argument, some kind of infallibility has been, explicitly or implicitly, assumed along the way. McCloskey (1985) has emphasized that we should not legislate for scientific progress. Yet the market for ideas is also an institution that needs regulations, albeit with an eye to controlling the power and dominance of certain actors, and not interfering with the goods they choose to produce.

In the present theoretical discussion, it is the struggle for pluralism that has priority. We want to spell out clearly what the case for pluralism is, before moving on to consider how it can be implemented. We need to abstract from our opinions about current orthodox economics as well as our own current theoretical and methodological inclinations when the aim is a stable and lasting doctrine of pluralism. First, having eliminated the ontological starting point, we must review and evaluate other contributions to the debate.

Screpanti's ethical precept

Screpanti (1997) rejects the ontological justification of pluralism and states that the “postmodern deconstruction of Methodology is the only way out of the difficulties occasioned by the realist obsession with ontology” (Screpanti, 1997: 299). Screpanti claims that a realist position can only recommend pluralism on the grounds of the researcher's cognitive limitations and/or the multifariousness of reality. On this view, increasing the range of approaches increases the chance of getting it right – or, due to the difficulties with articulating a general theory, local truths about parts of reality will have to do. Pluralism is a means to get closer to the objectively existing world, and is always so posited by the realist. For him or her, there can be but one truth. This seems to mean that pluralism cannot be valued for its own sake: “the methodological prescription can only be directed towards getting over [plurality]” (Screpanti, 1997: 300). Recall that Dow (2004) stated that monism would indeed have been preferable to pluralism if defensible.

Due to epistemic uncertainty, it is clear that the quest for one superior scientific approach, “the great axiom of methodology”, has to be given up, according to Screpanti. Yet “the great axiom of ontology”, the possibility of inferring true statements about reality that are independent of subjective viewpoints, is alive and

kicking. However, it is futile to cling on to the latter when it is admitted that reality is unreachable, claims Screpanti. This seems a logical conclusion, regardless of whether one is a realist or a postmodernist.

The postmodernist, according to Screpanti, holds that there is no meta-position from which one can evaluate different methodologies. Methods are important, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating. “Local metaphysics” serves a heuristic purpose in scientific activity. However, since we do not have recourse to any kind of objectivity, it is not possible either to prescribe methodological rules or to claim that a plurality of methods is superior to a single one (Screpanti, 1997: 305). Thus, since methodological pluralism, as an epistemological principle, can be advanced from neither a realist nor a postmodernist stance, methodological pluralism in the last instance reduces to a principle of tolerance. As a result, Screpanti resigns with regard to the knowledge-advancing aspect of pluralism:

Methodological pluralism is not a methodological canon, it is only an ethical precept. Methodological pluralism is none other than the application of the principle of tolerance to scientific activity. It serves to liberate the flow of discourses in the contest of truth. (Screpanti, 1997: 306)

Although Screpanti seems content with this conclusion, I suspect there is more to this last sentence than he himself seems to believe.

There are two problems, or questions, arising from this conclusion. Firstly, it is not clear what Screpanti means by “the contest of truth”, or at least how he thinks the winner will be appointed. I do think he is right that pluralism liberates the flow of discourse, but not that this leaves us without principles; the necessary principles will arise in discourse. Screpanti states: “Every theory is subjective. There is no escape from the circle of subjectivity” (Screpanti, 1997: 304), and he thereby falls into the dualist trap that his postmodern approach is meant to undermine. If we dismiss traditional ideals of objectivity, this does not mean that we end up in the other extreme of sheer subjectivity; we need to go beyond this simple dichotomy. A degree of objectivity, if only a situated form, can still be achieved; and there is the possibility of intersubjective foundations. Moreover, pluralism is more than just tolerance; it is the active promotion of alternative approaches. Pluralism not only liberates the flow of discourse; it makes sure to actively enrich it.

Screpanti nearly offers a way out for the realist in what he terms fallibilism.⁵² In this view the world is so complex and epistemic uncertainty so radical that we need to increase the range of theories and methods, which can then be reduced by criticism. For Screpanti, this is a weakened form of realism that renders ontology redundant. This is the case but it does not render the fallibilist approach redundant (if that is indeed Screpanti's meaning); it only calls for a reinterpretation of what reality and truth mean in this context. Against Screpanti, pluralism is epistemically effective.

Lee's tolerance

Frederic Lee is a proponent of tolerance pluralism. Lee (2011a; 2011b) distinguishes between "theoretical pluralism" and "intellectual pluralism". Theoretical pluralism refers to one multi-faceted discipline, which means that the incorporation of heterodoxy into the mainstream should be the aim of heterodox economists (Colander, 2007; Davis, 2009).⁵³ Lee is against this view, evoking a religious analogy: On the one hand, we have heretics, who have specific doctrines that challenge some prevalent beliefs; heretics are tolerated and may later be absorbed by orthodoxy. On the other hand, we have the blasphemous, who reject the religion altogether. Heterodox economics is regarded as blasphemy in this scheme; as a whole it runs contrary to mainstream economics. Furthermore, according to Lee, it exists independently of it.

This latter point can be contested. Lee claims that all streams within heterodoxy reject some of the key propositions of the mainstream, and taken in conjunction, they cover all of them and thus, in sum or by overlap, the whole mainstream is rejected.⁵⁴ This is not a logically compelling inference. Moreover, Dutt (2014) has pointed out that Lee's definition of heterodox economics as "the science of the social provisioning process" overlaps with orthodox economics, as well as with sociology and political science. And even if Lee is right that heterodoxy can do without orthodoxy, this does not mean that it exists independently of it. There is an important dialectic aspect to the orthodoxy/heterodoxy divide, even if the dialectics have come to a standstill.

⁵² He associates this with Caldwell (1982; 1988).

⁵³ The meaning of the term "theoretical pluralism" is therefore similar as in Dow (2008), but instead of opposing it to methodological pluralism etc., he opposes it to pure tolerance.

⁵⁴ This attempt at demarcating orthodoxy from heterodoxy is similar to Lawson's (2009a), although they arrive at different results.

On the positive side, Lee advocates intellectual pluralism, pluralism as tolerance. This entails freedom of nonconformity. Because there can be no fruitful cooperation between (most) orthodox and heterodox economists, they should stick to their own kind and carry on with their work. Pluralism is conceived as the permission of peaceful coexistence of incommensurable schools of thought. Lee explicitly draws on a notion of academic freedom in his defence of pluralism and this is an important notion to bring forward.

Lee can be seen as advocating pluralism as a means for advancing the heterodox cause, although in a different way than the ontological view, since it does not aim at replacing orthodoxy with heterodoxy. The main shortcoming is that this leaves the epistemological side of pluralism as good as untouched. The cross-fertilization of different viewpoints is, however, a crucial component in pluralism. Lee's proposal, on the other hand, amounts to a sort of peace treaty between two armies tired of fighting; its doctrine is "live and let live", yet has no clear epistemological vision.

Garnett (2011) objects that Lee's pluralism is solely negative freedom from interference and that he does not take the positive obligations of academics into account, in addition to operating with a fixed definition of orthodox and heterodox economics, respectively. Garnett thus wants to add positive ethical duties to Lee's negative freedom, and he also invokes epistemic principles (by which he means "visions of knowledge and learning" (Garnett, 2011: 565)), as this would be beneficial to the flourishing of economists. Mere tolerance is not enough. We need the active encouragement of critical thinking and the willingness to transcend traditional boundaries, to learn to be open to what the correct answer to any problem may be.

Lee is right that heterodoxy has remained outside orthodoxy because it has nothing to gain from being on the inside. The differences are substantial, and it would amount to compromising intellectual integrity to behave otherwise. Nevertheless, there is some truth in the claims that heterodox economists fail to comprehend the subtleties, diversity and relative openness of "cutting edge" research within the mainstream. This is an indication of discourse gone astray; criticism is not "taken up" by the mainstream, it is not even responded to; the criticisms by heterodox economists are not always updated – to a large extent because they do not see a need to engage fully with all aspects of the mainstream. These are dialogical flaws, which is the main

problem we are faced with in terms of the lack of pluralism.⁵⁵ However, we should also reiterate that intolerance is a personal trait of academics, which can be found in both camps.

Lee also employs the argument that mainstream theory is unrealistic. In Lee's case the lack of realism is not built into the justification of pluralism – just in his explanation for why he thinks orthodoxy is hopeless and heterodoxy needs to create its own life sphere. Yet his assertion that the mainstream as a whole is flawed is too partial.

In any case, Lee's main concern is to make sure that the academic rights of heterodox economists are preserved and thus responds well to the moral condition of pluralism. Yet his religious metaphor is deficient. Apart from the ultimate claim to truth that may reside in them, there is no inherent purpose in preserving particular schools of thought in the way that we should tolerate adherents of various religious faiths. Academics should be prepared to undergo conversion in a way that one can never expect from religious believers. Political pluralism means that one simply has to respect the other person's faith. In scientific endeavour, this is not the point. The end is truth, we must tolerate – and nurture – each academic's preferred way of arriving there, and encourage the multiplication of the ways in which it is done. It is not an aim in itself to maintain any given approach.

Caldwell's critical pluralism

Bruce Caldwell (1982; 1988) is generally credited for having initiated the literature on pluralism in economics. His starting point is epistemological – not ethical, yet not ontological. However, his conclusions resemble those arising from the ethical argument. Caldwell (1982) states that the quest for one single method is over: There is no way in which we can separate the context of discovery and the context of justification; falsificationism is neither practiced, nor feasible, nor desirable. Reasons for this include meaning variance and theory dependence of terms; no reference to invariable “reality” is possible. The demise of positivism and falsificationism provides space for methodological pluralism: “Methodological pluralism begins with the assumption that no single optimal methodology is discoverable” (Caldwell, 1982: 250). What does he mean by methodological pluralism?

⁵⁵ I will return to this in chapters 4 and 5.

The approach to economic methodology advocated here is labeled ‘methodological pluralism’ because it takes as a starting assumption that no universally applicable, logically compelling method of theory appraisal exists. (Or, more correctly, even if it exists, we can never be sure that we have found it, even if we have). (Caldwell, 1982: 245)

Caldwell is adamant that methodologists cannot prescribe inviolable methodological rules. Monism having failed, pluralism is the answer. Caldwell (1988) specifies that pluralism is a meta-methodological principle.⁵⁶ More specifically, pluralism means to study different existing research programmes in economics and economic methodology, and to criticize them from various perspectives. The aim is to raise methodological awareness and exhibit weaknesses as well as strengths of economic theory and practice, not prescription. Rather, the defining aspect of pluralism is criticism – the encouragement of a multiplicity of approaches, without advocating any particular one:

[T]he pluralist encourages and applauds both novel approaches to theorizing in economics *and* defenses of orthodoxy against the attacks that such novelty brings. (...) [I]t is only through the constant clash of a diversity of ideas that positions become sharply defined, intelligible, understandable. In short, I am contending that much is to be gained by shifting our focus away from the philosophical question of demarcation and towards the more practical concern for forms of criticism. (Caldwell, 1988: 236)

That is good advice. However, I believe Caldwell’s pluralism is not merely meta-methodological in the way he claims. He advocates both a pluralistic study of the range of existing approaches and the epistemological benefit of having a range of approaches. This is prescription. Even if he mainly speaks of the criticism of methodologists, the aim is to enhance the level or quality of criticism in the scientific community – which is clear e.g. when Caldwell explains the benefits of anarchism in order to counteract the tradition-bound features of scientific communities. Thus Caldwell in a way undermines the force of his own position.

⁵⁶ The above quote indicates that Caldwell has a meta-methodological (in the sense of the study of scientific approaches) doctrine in mind – although he in other places, such as in his treatment of Feyerabend, refers to “theoretical pluralism”.

Caldwell's (1982; 1988; 1997) identification of *criticism* as the key factor for regulating discourse and safeguarding it against the resort to pure da-da and the abuse of power in the absence of clear scientific standards, is an important notion to carry forward. Indeed, Caldwell (1997: 101) later renames his position "critical pluralism". He does, however, call for restraints on pluralism, and associates himself more closely with Dow and other realists, who call for such restraints, than with social constructivists such as Samuels (see below), who stress tolerance.⁵⁷ On my reading, he seems closer to Samuels than to Dow – in emphasizing criticism and radical epistemic uncertainty, and in seeking to go beyond incommensurability. To stress that scientists are committed to describing the world, as Caldwell seems to claim, does not necessarily invoke philosophical realism in the traditional sense.

In any case, Caldwell sets the stage for the pluralism debate by forcefully asserting the lack of decisive meta-principles and promoting criticism. He does not, however, discuss how criticism can actually be implemented. In stressing that the pluralist (*as pluralist*) does not advocate any specific research programme, he forgets the procedural and institutional aspects of criticism. Yet, in the absence of universal standards for theory and methodology choice, this is how we must evaluate scientific discourse: to what extent does it live up to ideals of critical scientific practice, and what can we do to ensure that they are approximated? This is a task for the pluralist methodologist that has, to a large extent, been overlooked.

Samuels' criticism and credentials

Warren J. Samuels (1997a) addresses "methodological (epistemological) pluralism". Note, firstly, that Samuels does not distinguish categorically between epistemological and methodological pluralism. This is in line with McLennan's (1995) terminology, denoting all the various positions that call for pluralism in the scientific realm as "methodological pluralism". This rather loose conceptual take is in line with the aim of this dissertation in spelling out what the calls for pluralism consistently amount to, taken together.

Samuels, as Caldwell, departs from acknowledging the lack of absolute standards, and wants to address how choice can be made under these circumstances: "The case for methodological pluralism ultimately rests on the necessity of choice in

⁵⁷ Moreover, Caldwell (1988) raises the concern that his view is not grounded in a theory of truth, although he suggests a pragmatic understanding.

the absence of a single conclusive final methodological or epistemological principle” (Samuels, 1997a: 67).

Samuels (1997a) states that pluralism is uncomfortable for those who assume the existence of 1) a given reality, 2) one correct theory and/or 3) one correct methodology and that our task is to find these things.⁵⁸ Samuels adopts a social constructivist position, meaning that the problems and objects of study are perceived as *made* by our conceptions rather than *accessed* by means of the human faculties. Hence no conclusive statements can be made regarding the nature of reality as something that exists independently of human experience.

Samuels’ view on pluralism thus amounts to:

Methodological pluralism rejects any exclusivist prescriptivism that seeks to establish one approach to methodology as supreme or to give it a privileged position. It favours a credentialist approach which attempts to establish the specific bases on which particular claims to knowledge rest, without affirming that one set of credentials is necessarily *a priori* prescriptively superior to another. (Samuels, 1997a: 75)

Samuels (1997a: 77) further states that “[t]here is no need for a *discipline-wide* conventional rule. What is needed is clear identification of the varying epistemological credentials of each statement or theory, and to let *each scholar* make up his or her mind what to accept.” I interpret this to mean that he sees the individual, rather than schools of thought or paradigms, as the smallest methodology-bearing unit – at least *prescriptively*. He is, however, by no means blind to the social dimension of scientific practice. We do have the means to assess credentials and practice criticism. Samuels does, however, not touch upon how such processes can be adequately secured and to what extent they are actually fulfilled.

Further, Samuels affirms the notion that scientific practice is dominated by “pragmatism”. Against the danger of “anything goes” Samuels (1997a: 68) states that in the absence of conclusive meta-criteria, “anything *necessarily* goes” anyway. We might as well acknowledge this and learn to live with the consequences. Pluralism

⁵⁸ It seems, then, that what we have dubbed “the ontological view” would fall in the first of these categories. However, this is not totally unambiguous; it depends on what is meant by “given” reality.

would then lead to more order in the sense that practitioners are aware of methodological limitations. We will know what we are dealing with. Moreover,

(...) methodological anarchy is avoided by emphasizing, first, the identification of the precise nature, grounds, and limits of particular methodologies; second, the importance of the *process* by which knowledge and the credentials of knowledge are pursued and knowledge worked out; third, the burden on each researcher to make studied determinations of credentials for him or her self; and fourth, the process of *criticism* itself. (Samuels, 1997a: 75)

This serves to highlight the importance of criticism and the sound basis of discourse that pluralism can establish.

Despite his fierce constructivism, Samuels does not escape the usual ontological vocabulary of realism and anti-realism. He refers to *the reality* that cannot be accessed, but is *mediated* through the mind. He states that “[e]conomic reality seems to be heterogeneous and kaleidoscopic; it is both complex and multifaceted and it changes in material ways” (Samuels, 1997a: 72). This is ontological pluralism, although he also states that we have to leave the question of ontological monism open. Apart from the lack of clarity on this point, Samuels’ justification of pluralism is in line with what we have been looking for; Samuels argues that there is no need for ontologically based demarcations of economic science and that the danger of “anything goes” is misapprehended. In fact, the recognition that no methodological limits can be drawn – and in actual fact are not drawn⁵⁹ – is conducive to establishing a sounder basis for discourse based on criticism and credentials once this fact is acknowledged. Crucially, this serves to make methodological pluralism “an epistemological position” (Samuels, 1997b: 308), going beyond the mere ethical principle.

For criticism and assessment of credentials to be possible, however, there must be some common ground for scholars to resort to; we then run into the problem of incommensurability between approaches discussed above. Samuels, however, states

⁵⁹ In this, Samuels seems to lie close to McCloskey (1985; 1994), who points to the discrepancy between what economists preach and practice; there is a tension between this view and Lawson’s definition of orthodox economics by means of methodological exclusivity in practice. This may be reconciled to some extent by an increased methodological awareness on the side of practitioners.

that there is no incommensurability in the strong sense; conversation is possible. This stance is neither more nor less valid than Dow's; the relevance of the incommensurability thesis cannot be determined in the abstract.⁶⁰

At any rate, Samuels argues persuasively for the futility of the ontological view, whereas he claims that pluralists are ontologically agnostic:

It is indeed impossible to found methodological pluralism on a realist point of view. Methodological pluralism is a principle of tolerance in both ontological and epistemological matters. (...) Methodological pluralists are agnostic with regard to ontology in general and to realism in particular. From the point of view of methodological pluralism, realism, through its axioms, assumes the point at issue, and analysing methodological pluralism from a realist perspective necessarily assumes its position on that point. (Samuels, 1997b: 308)

Indeed. The main gaps that Samuels (like Caldwell) leaves for us to fill are how the institutionalization of criticism and the proper use of credentials (the meaning of which he does not elaborate upon) can occur and be evaluated. Moreover, there is scope for reconciling his appeal to the *individual* scientist with his emphasis on the *social* construction of knowledge. I will deal with all of this in due course.

Freeman and Kliman's critical pluralism

Freeman and Kliman (2006) do touch upon the required procedural and institutional aspects of pluralism and criticism. Independently of Caldwell, they dub their position "critical pluralism". Freeman and Kliman supersede Caldwell in detailing what critical pluralism entails. The authors argue that "pluralism in economics requires formal rules of conduct to guarantee pluralism in research. These should provide for transparent and professional standards for research, presentation and editorial judgement" (Freeman and Kliman, 2006: 31), and this requires reform of the discipline, which will render it externally accountable. It is required for the economist to:

⁶⁰ However, Samuels' (1997a: 77-78) final statement that a strict interpretation of incommensurability "is not embraced by methodological pluralism" does not appear a valid point, since this is not a matter of normative embracing but whether real obstacles to methodological pluralism actually exist. A statement that the presence of strong incommensurability makes it impossible to embrace methodological pluralism would have been more accurate.

- (1) engage with, and critically examine, explanations alternative to her own;
 - (2) clearly state the alternative presuppositions which differentiate her own explanation of observed reality from the alternatives considered;
 - (3) clearly identify the evidence in support of her own conclusion
 - (4) clearly identify the evidence that supports the researcher's interpretation of the alternative views against which she tests her conclusions, in order to provide for a fair test.
- (Freeman and Kliman, 2006: 30)

Note, however, that this pluralism is not (like Caldwell's pluralism notionally is) on the meta-methodological level; this is a recommendation for the individual practitioner, provided that she operates within a conducive institutional environment.

The authors are emphatic that pluralism is not strictly tolerance, something "adjunct" to science, rather it is integral to the pursuit of truth. Pluralism is scientific, they say. In this way, the authors explicitly aim at both conditions of pluralism. They too depart from the lack of decisive meta-principles, although they do not go into philosophical detail. However, on the one hand, they refer to the incommensurability (although they do not use this term) between different viewpoints, based on different ontologies (what Kuhn would call different world-views), and that the empirical realm as well as the meaning of scientific terms are to a large extent determined by these viewpoints (Freeman and Kliman, 2006: 49-50). This warrants the testing of empirical reality against a multiplicity of theoretical accounts.⁶¹ Still they speak of some empirical "raw material" that is available to all equally, prior to theorizing (Freeman and Kliman, 2006: 50), which the theories should be tested against. Thus there seems to be a contradiction here between a strong theory-ladenness of observation on the one hand and a naïve empiricist claim on the other.

Freeman and Kliman affirm the danger that heterodoxy might turn into a new orthodoxy. In fact, they firmly assert that all existing heterodox schools of thought (with explicit reference to Keynesians and Marxists) represent "monothoretic practice" (Freeman and Kliman, 2006: 30), that is, contenders for orthodoxy. Each school of thought seems to work on the tacit, but false, presumption that it represents a single view, rather than a multiplicity of views. This multiplicity is being suppressed within the schools in the name of true Keynesianism, Marxism, etc. (Freeman and

⁶¹ This is a central point for Feyerabend (2010) as well.

Kliman, 2006: 34). Sometimes adherents to a heterodox school of thought are as, or even more, hostile to new ideas within that school than the mainstream is to heterodox ideas, they claim.

This perceived state of affairs is far from the vision depicted by Lawson (2006; 2010), who sees heterodoxy as united against orthodoxy and as a whole providing a pluralist alternative, by in a complementary way dealing with different aspects or problems of an open system reality. Freeman and Kliman's view is largely based on their own experiences within the Marxist school. If they are right, it does pose further problems for the idea of pluralism within heterodoxy, based on a shared ontology. Yet the firm assertion of intolerance within heterodoxy runs counter to common perceptions. Garnett (2011), in contrast, ascribes to heterodoxy an innate endorsement of open and critical discourse. We cannot currently settle this matter.

The consequence of the strong school affiliations for the term "pluralism" is that it is being reduced to "diversity"⁶², which according to Freeman and Kliman is a mistake. In this misconception, what is aimed at is a fair representation of each school. The problem, they point out, is reflected in the statement of the International Confederation of Associations for Pluralism in Economics (ICAPE). Heterodox economics is locked in an image of the discipline as consisting of a range of schools of thought. For the authors, schools of thought are detrimental to pluralism in seeking the single truth within their framework.

This "paradigmist" disease is somehow transmitted from orthodox economics:

The prevailing informal norm is rooted in a reductionist syllogism: since, the heterodox researcher reasons, there is only one truth, there is therefore no need to examine many theories. (...) From this standpoint, which is in fact shared by many heterodox economists, the only thing wrong with orthodoxy is that it has not found the truth. Therefore, the only necessary step to reform economics is to substitute the correct, heterodox single truth for the false, orthodox single truth. (Freeman and Kliman, 2006: 34)

The problem is the organization of the whole discipline of economics, not only the mainstream:

⁶² Or "plurality" in Mäki's (1997) conceptualization.

(...) from the very start of a researcher's career, profound material conditions impel her or him at every step to a narrow theoretical specialisation. Monotheoretical research practice is an intrinsic organisational factor in what is considered 'good' in economics. (Freeman and Kliman, 2006: 37)

We therefore have to enter at the start of a researcher's career, whether orthodox or heterodox, in order to remedy this situation. Freeman and Kliman are right that the structure of the discipline as such is inhibiting the development of a pluralist mind set, and they are right in hinting to education as the solution. Unfortunately, they do not go into any further detail on this point. Fortunately, I will do so in chapter 6.⁶³

The authors do, however, challenge Dow's and Garnett's view (dealt with below) of schools of thought/paradigms as the ideal locus of knowledge and truth advancement. The key to a sound discipline lies in the encouragement of communication across such communities. Their position is largely Feyerabendian, rather than Kuhnian. The individual economist has to be pluralist, and pluralism is necessary for progress, for economics to be scientific: "Our central thesis is that pluralism is not the condiment but the main course. *Because economics is not pluralist, it is not scientific.* Thus at stake is not just whether economics is 'nasty' or treats people badly, but whether its content is correct" (Freeman and Kliman, 2006: 38).

They then move on to claiming that economics is organized, unconsciously, in accordance with the neoclassical model of perfect competition, and contest the much-used metaphor of the marketplace of ideas. Intellectual competition in economics is normally not resolved by reference to *truth*, but to *political acceptance*, they claim. Being Marxists, their explanation naturally invokes the ruling classes:

Reform, we believe, requires conscious organisation because scientific practice requires a continuous battle with the anti-pluralistic tendencies of the profession and discipline of economics, tendencies that, given its social role and function, come naturally to it. (Freeman and Kliman, 2006: 41)

⁶³ Here, I will also touch upon Freeman's subsequent papers (2008; 2009; 2010; 2011), which deals with these questions.

Thus economics is monist for ideological reasons.⁶⁴ Such ideological explanations can be important. I am not sure it is needed in order to bridge the perceived problem and the proposed solution here.⁶⁵ “Conscious organisation” points towards a solution, but it is not very informative. Having identified the ideology of the ruling classes as the problem, one might expect that the overthrow of the capitalistic system would be the solution. However, their reform proposal does not invoke ideology, but rather consists of guidelines for *critical pluralistic practice*, which consists of: informing readers of the alternatives, not denying legitimacy to alternative views, identifying the conceptual basis of ‘facts’, distinguishing original texts from subsequent interpretations, arguing from evidence, distinguishing between internal inconsistency, interpretive difficulties and disagreement, and characterizing schools of thought in the preferred manner (Freeman and Kliman, 2006: 51). These are factors we associate with good academic practice. In this regard, it goes a long way in supporting our cause. Individuals have to be able to transcend affiliations, cults, as they unfortunately sometimes appear to be.⁶⁶ The need emerges to move beyond allegiance to particular schools, and to direct the attention to fostering good practice among individual economists. Their diagnosis is, however, not fully up to scratch, and their prescribed remedy in need of supplementation.

Garnett’s traces of paradigmism

Garnett (2006) seeks a resolution to the charges of “strategic pluralism” or “paradigmism” raised by Sent (2003; 2006) against authors such as Dow and Lawson. In this, he seeks to overcome the problem that Dow responded to by distinguishing between the meta-methodological and methodological levels, i.e. there is no contradiction in advocating a pluralism of approaches yet adhering to one in particular.

⁶⁴ Moreover, they claim that, as opposed to economics, natural science is naturally pluralistic, because this pluralism is to the benefit of the ruling classes.

⁶⁵ Moreover, it lies at the fringes of this thesis, which deals with factors internal to the economics discipline, and not its wider sociological context. In the concluding chapter, I will point to some ideological factors that might have contributed to the perpetuation of the current monism.

⁶⁶ I recall a prominent Postkeynesian calling Minsky a “neoclassical” because he differed from him on one particular point, and a group of Marxists collectively denouncing David Harvey for being, allegedly, a social democrat. I fear that these instances do reflect beliefs about incontestable truths in heterodox communities (at least that such truths can be found), i.e. dogmatism.

Garnett, however, advocates a synthesis of paradigmism and pluralism “via a liberal rethinking of the ends and means of academic inquiry” (Garnett, 2006: 532). His aim is an “egalitarian pluralist economics”, in which schools of thought with an equal standing co-exist. Garnett thus seeks to integrate the two tendencies that he perceives, namely pluralism – “seeking to promote tolerance and critical engagement among diverse points of view” (Garnett, 2006: 522) – and paradigmism, attempts at forming a single correct alternative that can supplant neoclassical economics. This kind of paradigmism has traditionally been the aim of heterodox schools of thought, Garnett claims. The problem is, as we have anticipated above, that

(...) leading heterodox economists (including some who profess to be pluralists) are still committed to the paradigmist approach, viewing heterodox economics as primarily a search for demarcation criteria that would render heterodox economics distinct from and superior to orthodox (mainstream) economics. (Garnett, 2006: 522)

Garnett wants a redefinition of science, following McCloskey, as a liberal conversation between economists where the principal aim, drawing on Amartya Sen and the capabilities approach, is intellectual freedom. This is a step in the right direction. We have to cultivate economists who are actually capable of being pluralists.

One of the problems heterodox paradigmists face, Garnett observes, is the changing face of mainstream economics. The opponent cannot be easily identified as a “monolithic enemy” (Garnett, 2006: 526), neoclassical economics. Still, there is a tendency for heterodox economists to think in terms of an us/them dichotomy, and a dream of erecting the new citadel of truth to replace the old one, which downgrades the importance of pluralism: “For a radical Kuhnian, however, pluralism can never be more than a secondary priority, something to be honored only insofar as it does not conflict with the first-order imperatives of scientific or ideological victory” (Garnett, 2006: 527).

Garnett ascribes paradigmism to a “cold war dichotomy”, which he argues underlies Kuhn’s analysis as well as the dichotomy of orthodox versus heterodox economics. Many heterodox economists still look at the mainstream in oppositional terms, and although they might be tolerant to other views, this applies only to those who are on the same side of the dividing line.

Their main philosophical strategy is to formulate rules – demarcation criteria – whereby economic science is (re)defined to include Us but not Them. (...) Even the open-system pluralisms of Dow and Lawson carry residual traces of this paradigmist vision, insisting that heterodox economics define itself as the Other of orthodox economics. (Garnett, 2006: 531-532)

On the open-system view, pluralism applies only to the insiders, to “Us”. This is consonant with the assessment of the ontological view above; pluralism is “structured” to accommodate current heterodoxy. In order to transgress this cold war stalemate, Garnett invokes McCloskey’s (1985; 1994) view of science as a critical and accountable exchange of ideas, a tolerant discussion where persuasion is the only means available – given the lack of external criteria of validity. However, for McCloskey it is sufficient to raise the rhetorical awareness of economists in order to realize the liberal, tolerant conversation, and thereby some of the *de facto* oppressing institutional factors in the economics discipline are left out.

To complement this notion of scientific practice in order to ensure equality between scholars, Garnett draws on Sen’s conception of “development as freedom”, which he aims at translating into “learning as freedom”. In this effort, knowledge becomes a means to freedom and the good academic life. This is a pertinent supplement, but it only does half the job. For whereas freedom to live the good life according to one’s own choice can be seen as a political end (Sen, 1999), inducing tolerance, the scientific realm has truth (in addition to justice) as its ultimate end and has an inherent inclination towards it; any view is always open to challenge, and should be challenged, in a way lifestyles or cultures should not. In Garnett’s conceptualization, then, the epistemological demand is subordinate to the ethical demand. Yet the capability approach provides a framework for discussing the education of economists with a view to developing scholars with pluralist dispositions.⁶⁷

However, in order to retain the epistemological component of pluralism, Garnett wants to preserve and build on existing heterodox “paradigm communities”:

[P]aradigm communities [are] generators of intellectual capabilities that would not otherwise be available to certain individuals or groups. Further, it sees the

⁶⁷ Garnett’s (2009a; 2009b; 2011) later papers integrate the two dimensions in a better way.

empowerment of these marginal voices as a vital prerequisite for a scientifically productive pluralism. A group of scholars that is able to establish an identity as a distinct school of thought is afforded a place to stand, a right to exist, a means to appear without shame in the public space of academic conversation. (Garnett, 2006: 536-537)

Garnett wants to reconcile paradigmism and pluralism. This invokes the inherent tension in Kuhn's work regarding description and prescription. To be sure, Garnett's view of paradigms is even more liberal than Dow's. Yet it is at best ambiguous whether paradigmism is epistemologically required. Garnett is partly motivated by a concern for the identity and dignity of scholars and sees paradigmism as serving a strategic purpose in "affording a right to exist". Yet the paper explicitly builds on a McCloskey/Sen approach, and there is nothing in either the former's rhetoric or the latter's capabilities that suggests a compartmentalization of the discipline. On the contrary, McCloskey (1994) explicitly draws on Feyerabend. Sen and McCloskey are both individualistic. Does Garnett's view of paradigms as identity shaping imply the dealing out of rights to exist to groups, and to individuals only to the extent that they belong to such groups? The role of paradigmism in his outlook is not clear.

However, Garnett's use of the term "paradigm" is unconventional. The members of a paradigm need not have shared world-views on his account; they can be heterogeneous. This kind of shared commitment is precisely what constitutes paradigms in Kuhn's exposition. The term "paradigm", then, seems to have lost the import of Kuhn's concept. It is hard to imagine a paradigm in which the members do "not possess a singular framework or worldview" (Garnett, 2006: 537).⁶⁸ When Garnett (2006: 537) is arguing that it "may be best, from a capabilities standpoint, for paradigm groups *not* to be so homogenous", he is really arguing that we should break down paradigms. Agreed, but his overall argument suffers from his determination to use this term. He might have been better off restricting his usage to "schools of thought". The positive epistemological point he seems to want to bring across is that scholars benefit from having (specialized) venues for elaborating and ratifying ideas.

⁶⁸ The term "paradigm" has two senses: 1) *disciplinary matrix* – the shared commitment and beliefs of scientists and 2) *paradigm exemplar* – an example for puzzle solving (such as Newton's principles) that guides research instead of explicit rules (Kuhn, 1996 [1970]: 175). Masterman (1970) originally found 21 senses in Kuhn's exposition, after which Kuhn narrowed it down to two.

Garnett is invoking the social nature of knowledge, which is important and must be acknowledged.

Invoking Kuhn might have been a gesture to concede some points to the traditional “paradigmists”, or a move to safeguard against the discipline shattering into pieces – anything goes! – but it is not entirely successful in demonstrating either the problem or the solution in this regard. Garnett has correctly observed the problem with McCloskey’s position, i.e. that there is no automatic way in which inequality in power distribution is prevented in the conversation among economists.⁶⁹ Yet his institutional recommendation fails at being a *pluralist* solution to this problem.⁷⁰ However, I suspect that our differences are largely conceptual and that our ideas of pluralism would turn out very similar in practice.

At any rate, Garnett’s constructive attempts to seek reconciliation bear plenty of fruits. In a different paper, Garnett (2011: 565) seems to hint that there are monist and pluralist researchers on the level of individuals. This would mean that pluralist academics are self-critical, constantly reassessing their views, and looking to learn

⁶⁹ Garnett is right in pointing out that McCloskey’s conception of a conversation does not provide the institutional requirements for the proposed activity, and hence in invoking the capability approach. Yet as soon as we start educating the economists in the way he proposes, he adds nothing by grouping them together in a particular way.

⁷⁰ Another potential weakness of Garnett’s argument is his coupling of the dualistic mindset and the Cold War. One would presume, then, that since we are now past the Cold War era, we should free ourselves from this kind of oppositional thinking. It is true that Kuhn’s vocabulary contains terms that justify the depiction of the dichotomous opposition between orthodoxy and heterodoxy (in particular scientific revolution and the notion of incommensurability between world-views), and that the opposition of competing paradigms is posed as stricter than it could have otherwise been. However, this tendency to dichotomisation is not peculiar to the cold war era, it (can be argued that it) runs through the whole of Western intellectual history (as the work of Derrida points out). Garnett’s argument echoes (e.g.) John Stuart Mill (and Kuhn’s argument does so strikingly) from a hundred years before the Cold War: “Heretical opinions, on the other hand, are generally some of these suppressed and neglected truths, bursting the bonds which kept them down, and either seeking reconciliation with the truth contained in the common opinion, or fronting it as enemies, and setting themselves up, with similar exclusiveness, as the whole truth. The latter case is hitherto the most frequent, as, in the human mind, one-sidedness has always been the rule, and many-sidedness the exception. Hence, even in revolutions of opinion, one part of the truth usually sets while another rises. Even progress, which ought to superadd, for the most part only substitutes, one partial and incomplete truth for another; improvement consisting chiefly in this, that the new fragment of truth is more wanted, more adapted to the needs of the time, than that which it displaces”. (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 52) Thus it may be harder to combat dualism than Garnett’s argument seems to suggest. It may be a fundamental problem of human psychology. Still I agree with Garnett’s general outlook. In fact, the analysis of Mill’s arguments for the liberty of thought and discussion, yet to come, will support Garnett’s views and – hopefully – help to clarify the content and foundation of pluralism.

from others, regardless of which school they adhere to.⁷¹

Garnett importantly emphasizes the ethical component of pluralism, as well as stressing the epistemological component. His ethical component is doubly important as it explicitly draws on the *ethos* – the character – of the pluralist researcher, which needs cultivating. Moreover, his emphasis of *egalitarian* pluralism is important, a point we will return to in chapter 4 in the context of the notion of *tempered equality*.

Yet Garnett's appeal to paradigms seems unnecessary and counteracts his attempts at creating pluralist individuals who are able to transcend the conservative boundaries of paradigmatic discipline and tradition. Kuhnian scientists are neither virtuous nor free. A Feyerabendian approach is much more in line with our – and Garnett's own – concerns, because it aims explicitly at truth advancement and embraces humanitarian values. Thus Garnett's description of the *institutional structure* intended to bring about and support pluralism fails to meet criteria of ideal scientific discourse. We will have to improve on that aspect in the following.

However, Garnett (2011) clarifies some of the epistemological issues involved. He draws on what he calls an open-system epistemology and states that “commensurability (...) is the creation of intellectual common ground that enables criticism, collaboration and mutual learning among otherwise heterogeneous approaches” (Garnett, 2011: 566). Many traces of the paradigmist vocabulary seem to have disappeared, and he puts even more emphasis on the cultivation of academic freedom through education and what this entails. I will return to Garnett's constructive views on pluralist education in chapter 6.

The lay of the land

I would add that in my view the Doctor has had an ulterior motive, no doubt unconscious in stirring up this agitation; he talks about the baths, but what he's really aiming at is a revolution. (Ibsen, 1980 [1892]: 187)

⁷¹ In addition, he does provide a point which might render open-system theorizing inherently more pluralist than closed-system theorizing, namely because: “A pluralist, open-system epistemology also accentuates intellectual freedom: the scholarly freedom to craft one's own answers to questions that have no single correct answer” (Garnett, 2011: 566). Even if an open system theorist might be more *open*, this does not mean it is a workable foundation of pluralism.

Dr Stockmann was accused of having ulterior motives with his agitation regarding the public baths; he wanted a revolution. In the same manner, pleas for pluralism have been accused of being “strategic” moves in the fight for a scientific revolution – dominance and power (Sent, 2003). Dr Stockmann’s ulterior motives were truth and justice. In the same manner, the ulterior motives of pluralists are precisely truth and justice, although it has not always been accurately stated. Therefore, the challenge Sent poses is pertinent, and one I intend to take on:

If heterodox economists are serious about their advocacy of pluralism (...) they need to carefully consider the nature, source, and classification of pluralism. And they need to confront the charge that pluralism inevitably leads to an anything goes view. They also need to beware of sliding into monism. For instance, an ontological perspective that stresses the patchyness of the world runs the risk of being reduced to monism because it might be consistent with the idea that for every phenomenon there is a single, best account. An epistemological view that involves the hedging of bets may reduce to monism if the long-term goal is a single comprehensive account. An epistemological view that relies on the cognitive limitations of economists may reduce to monism if the limitations are merely delaying the development of a single, complete, and correct theory. (...) Finally, they need to ensure (...) that the material and social conditions for the flourishing of pluralism are met. (Sent, 2003)

Most of these concerns have been addressed in the foregoing, and they will be further addressed in the following as we form the renewed analysis of pluralism.

Yet the allegation of strategic pluralism is to some extent a misunderstanding. It confuses two separate motives of pluralist heterodox economists, namely, on the one hand, the struggle to be academically accepted and, on the other hand, the vindication of the particular theories they uphold. The latter is of secondary importance here, although it may not be perceived as such by the heterodox theorist. It is the effective monism of the prevailing discourse, and its consequences in terms of intellectual oppression, which makes heterodox economists claim the superiority of their own theories.⁷² The term “strategic” is thus not adequate, as it is not a conscious strategy on the part of heterodox economists to plea for pluralism as a preliminary

⁷² Because there is no level playing field to start with, one might resort to more drastic arguments, and to a large degree this might be governed by psychological mechanisms. De Langhe (2009) seems to support this line of reasoning.

step in order to overcome the prevailing orthodoxy. The recommendations of Colander (2007) and Davis (2009) that heterodox economists should aim at becoming a part of the mainstream are more strategic.⁷³

The difficulty in grasping the grounds of the doctrine applies to proponents of pluralism as well. The fundamental motivating forces behind pluralism are in an important sense independent of particular theoretical outlooks. It is, however, understandable that one addresses the current dominant approach in economics, because this determines the space within which a doctrine of pluralism must be set forward. Nevertheless, we have to distinguish between the doctrine itself and its immediate context and rather look at the characteristics of a situation of unacceptable monism, which is the general problem situation that arguments for pluralism must refer to. As an analytical move, the doctrine must be detached from specific theoretical outlooks.

The accusation that pluralists have hidden agendas amounts to accusing them of being concerned with the implementation of the doctrine, whereas the proper accusation (if any should be made) would be that the doctrine has not been coherently spelled out. It is hidden in the dark and must be dug out. It is precisely my contention that these two efforts (on the meta-methodological and methodological levels, respectively) need to be categorically separated, and this is safeguarded by the abstract move I am undertaking.

The review thus far is not exhaustive of authors who have written on pluralism in economics; they are simply too many. Its purpose has been to exhibit the main positions, and their merits and problems, in order to point to the gaps and contradictions involved in the calls for pluralism to date.

Pluralism has become a buzzword that is meant to denote the answer to the problem perceived in the economics discipline, namely monism. The suppression of alternatives inhibits 1) the advancement of knowledge and 2) the flourishing of economists who disinterestedly seek the truth through non-orthodox approaches. The justification and content of pluralism thus has to be true to its two sources: the calls for truth and justice in academia. Pluralism has to encompass both these components

⁷³ For Davis (2007) "strategic pluralism" is not a derogatory term; rather, he thinks that demands for pluralism must start from considering the strategic space in which pluralism can be achieved, to the degree that the environment allows it. He seems to think that a level of tolerance can be achieved, whereas Freeman and Kliman's (2006) ideal of critical pluralism is out of bounds.

in any situation perceivable. Moreover, pluralism should be universalizable. From a moral viewpoint, this means that the consequences of the doctrine must be acceptable to both orthodox and heterodox economists; but adding the epistemological dimension, it must be acceptable in terms of securing truth-pursuing endeavours.

In this review, it has been argued that the ontological view on pluralism fails at meeting both of these criteria. It fails at truth, because it does not sufficiently stimulate the continuous encouragement of opposing ideas; rather, it seeks to build on and consolidate current (heterodox) schools of thought. It fails at justice because, in excluding (or downgrading) neoclassical economics, pluralism cannot be universalized to all affected by it. Moreover, and importantly, ontology itself is subject to fallibility and the suggested demarcation line of open system ontology is contingent. In addition, there is no necessity in accepting the mapping presumption, which makes the starting point more controversial than need be.

Other treatments of pluralism emphasize the ethical dimension (e.g. Lee, Screpanti), but ignore or misrepresent the epistemological side. Others (Garnett, Samuels) seek to fuse the ethical dimension with epistemology, yet carry traces of views that render their own views inconsistent or insufficient. Some hint at criticism as the key factor (Caldwell, Freeman and Kliman), whereas Freeman and Kliman, Garnett, Samuels and Caldwell all hint at the individual economist's character as key. Yet it is not clear how this criticism can be institutionalized: we need to foster both the critical economist and the environment conducive to her practice. This is the main gap in the discussion to date, which I will seek to fill in the following chapters.

Ultimately, then, none of the contributors manage to meet the demands for both truth and justice, and at the same time qualify as a solution to the perceived problem of monism. The literature on pluralism in economics is, for natural reasons, too entangled with the cause of heterodox economics. The ensuing discussion arises from the *endoxa*, from the prevailing opinions among the partakers in the pluralism in economics debate, yet seeks to transcend the heterodox/orthodox divide. This abstract move will, in the first instance, be undertaken in chapter 3 with reference to the thought of John Stuart Mill and Paul Feyerabend, in seeking to clarify the implications of radical epistemic uncertainty, which serves as the prime justification of pluralism as the active encouragement of opposing ideas. We will start to see the contours of the moral dimension of pluralism as well. I then turn in chapter 4 to the ideal institutional conditions for critical scientific discourse – still independent of

particular viewpoints – before I assess the current conditions in light of this ideal (chapter 5), and give my recommendations based on this evaluation (chapter 6).

Chapter 3. Some footnotes to J.S. Mill

[W]e want to liberate people not to make them succumb to a new kind of slavery, *but to make them realise their own wishes*, however different these wishes may be from our own (...) Why would anyone want to liberate anyone else? (...) because liberty is the best way to free development *and thus to happiness*. We want to liberate people *so that they can smile*. (Feyerabend, 1981a: 166)

Having reviewed the main contributions of the pluralism debate in economics, the stage is set for developing this thesis. Justifications for pluralism stem from epistemic uncertainty, but the full consequences have not been drawn. The challenge is to merge the epistemological and ethical sources of pluralism in a way that preserves both.

In this chapter, I will present John Stuart Mill's (1998 [1859]) defence of the liberty of thought and discussion and tentatively relate it to the perceived monism and the orthodox/heterodox relation in economics. Starting from the fallibility of all beliefs, I undertake to show how the persistent encouragement of opposing ideas can indeed be a means to both the advancement of truth and to the freedom of scholars to pursue truth in the way they deem fit. Moreover, the application of Mill's arguments provides an understanding of pluralism that is advantageous to both orthodox and heterodox economists, thereby meeting the universality criterion of moral doctrines. Thereafter, Feyerabend's (2010) utilization of Mill's argument in shaping "methodological anarchism" will be explored and the implications of his views for pluralism will be assessed. This, in turn, will precipitate the discussion of what a pluralist economist is and the conditions under which she will flourish. Mill and Feyerabend supply "negative freedom" (Berlin, 1969), or freedom from the tyranny of established tradition, and they point to the encouragement of opposing views (proliferation of theories) as the key to progress. We do, however, need certain institutional requirements to be in place in order to facilitate such ideal critical discourse (chapter 4) and to provide economists with the appropriate academic capabilities to carry it out (chapter 6).

When heterodox economists look at the mainstream, they see a monster that is inhibiting truth, and inhibiting the right of all scholars to pursue truth in the way they deem fit. This is the abstract problem situation we are dealing with: the tyranny of the majority. More concretely, the premises of the ensuing discussion are that the

mainstream has retained its methodological core, and that this is being used as an effective demarcation criterion, leading to a flawed (or at least deficient) scientific discourse. This means that the discussion in this chapter is hypothetical. I am not, at this point, evaluating the actual state of oppression within the economics community,⁷⁴ or the truth claims of the orthodox and heterodox positions, respectively.

Happiness and liberty

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) was a political and moral philosopher in the utilitarian and liberal tradition. In a sense, he was torn between the Enlightenment tradition of Jeremy Bentham and his father James Mill and Coleridge's Romanticism, aiming at harmonizing these two rather different outlooks (Gray, 1998; Skorupski, 2007). As a result, his utilitarianism is broader – more complex, yet less clear – than Bentham's hedonistic calculus. Mill (1998 [1861]) subscribes to “the greatest happiness principle”, but tries to grapple with the fact that he values a plurality of ends, as well as with the fact that some pleasures seems more elevated than others and with the potential conflict between individual and aggregate utility. He therefore specifies that happiness is the justification of all ends and that objects are desired for themselves insofar as they are “parts of happiness”. He distinguishes between the quality and quantity of pleasure, and, importantly, he stresses our individuality – and that this individuality is a part of our happiness. Dignity and virtue, on the other hand, are associated with the *will* and not with *desire*, and are related to freedom rather than happiness (Skorupski, 2007).

For the present purposes, it is his doctrine of liberty that is of interest. Yet his conception of liberty is linked to his conception of happiness. How does he link liberty and utility? We need to cultivate our individual will and desires and feelings in order to achieve the highest possible happiness for ourselves and to enjoy the highest quality pleasures, and this can only be done by exploring one's originality and spontaneity in full liberty (insofar as this does not unduly interfere with the liberty of others). The main obstacle to this is “the despotism of custom” (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 78). People must be allowed to grow as trees, not be trimmed, or treated as machines, and act spontaneously. Our development must flow from our true nature, rather than

⁷⁴ This is the topic of chapter 5.

aim at conformity. “This idea is linked to education or culture, as against indoctrination: education brings out and develops our spontaneous responses” (Skorupski, 2007: 30).

Individuality is thus valued in itself, as a component of well-being, and liberty is the means to achieve it. Skorupski (2007: 27) dubs this the *Millian principle*: “only the fullest self-development of one’s potential gives access to the highest forms of human happiness.” Mill’s thinking is clearly based on a notion of self-development:

A person whose desires and impulses are his own – are the expression of his own nature, as it has been developed and modified by his own culture – is said to have a character. One whose desires and impulses are not his own, has no character, no more than a steam-engine has character. (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 67)

There is a range of different paths to happiness and they must all be cultivated; individuals should seek to experiment to find their own unique path. Mill (1998 [1859]: 71) states that individuality and development are the same thing and that the cultivation of the individual is the only way of achieving self-realization. As I will discuss later, this emphasis on the individual is a challenge given the social nature of scientific knowledge. Still there is nothing in principle that excludes the consideration of the social and institutional conditioning of the individual, as long as such considerations are supplied with care. In fact, Mill believes that we have an inherent ability to nurture our own development, *provided* that this is supported by the proper social institutions (Skorupski, 2007). This will be a crucial point: self-realization is linked to a liberal ideal of the character, and it invokes education and cultivation of the individual. Moreover, this forms an important part of the background for understanding the liberty of thought and discussion – for the justification of pluralism. The *happy* person is a person who has been allowed to flourish in liberty; the same seems by analogy to apply to the academic, who in order to fulfil herself, must have the chance to pursue truth in liberty.

Liberalism is most commonly understood as a politico-philosophical doctrine of minimal interference,⁷⁵ but for Mill its core is the liberty of thought (Skorupski, 2007). The liberty of thought and discussion is an extension of the “liberty principle”

⁷⁵ A more comprehensive discussion of what liberalism entails would be out of place in this context.

– which involves no interference, no harm, but also some obligations to the state and to help educating the fellow-man (Skorupski, 2007: 48-49) – to the domain of opinions. However, the diversity of opinions seems to take on a particular importance: even fewer checks and balances are warranted here than in the domain of actions. In this way, Mill's defence of the liberty of thought and discussion has to be seen as both within and above his general political and moral outlook, and the arguments for the liberty of thought and discussion are relatively free-standing. On the background thus sketched, I will investigate these arguments.

On the liberty of thought and discussion

Mill's discussion "On the liberty of thought and discussion" takes place in the second chapter of his seminal work *On Liberty*. It would not be a gross overstatement to claim that the full justification for pluralism is comprised in Mill's exposition; the rest is elaboration and adaptation to the present discourse.

Mill's (1998 [1859]: 20-61) outline of the liberty of thought and discussion juxtaposes the prevailing belief (the orthodox view) with some challenging new idea (the heterodox view). He argues that regardless of the truth-status of the heterodox doctrine – be it true, partly true or false – silencing contesting ideas is adverse to the purposes of truth. Rather, promoting challenging views is always beneficial. Moreover, the fact that we can never know the truth status of a belief further enhances the cause.

In the following, Mill's four arguments for the liberty of thought and discussion will be dealt with in turn, tentatively relating it to the perceived situation in economics. We have to consider both the situation in which current orthodoxy is dominating current heterodoxy as well as a situation in which the current heterodoxy has come to replace the current orthodoxy. This is a demand of the abstract move, ensuring that the resulting doctrine is universal.

First argument

Large changes in our understanding of the world that we now regard as progress, such as the Copernican Revolution and the Enlightenment, were provocative and in some sense *irrational* when they first occurred. They remained so for a long period of time until our minds were habituated into appreciating them, adapting to them the way in which we see the world. As Amartya Sen puts it:

It is not hard to see that the possibility of scientific advance is closely connected with the role of heterodoxy, since new ideas and discoveries have to emerge initially as heterodox views, which differ from, and may be in conflict with, established understanding. The history of scientific contributions across the world – the experiences of Copernicus, or Galileo, or Newton, or Darwin – shows many examples of the part that resolute heterodoxy has to play, in scrutinizing, and when necessary rejecting, the views that are standardly accepted. (Sen, 2006: 26)

With the benefit of hindsight, our intellectual history would suggest that heretical beliefs might turn into *truths* in due course. It is from the outside – from previously unexplored domains of enquiry – that we should expect great leaps in our understanding of the world. Thus we should always be receptive to new ideas. By refusing to give any particular doctrine a hearing, because we see them as nonsensical or dangerous, we are assuming a measure of infallibility on our own part. And not only this, we are stalling the advancement of knowledge.

This reflects Mill's first argument, pertaining to a scenario in which the heterodox view is true⁷⁶:

1. First, if any opinion is compelled to silence, that opinion may, for aught we certainly know, be true. To deny this is to assume our own infallibility. (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 59)

Relating this to the orthodox/heterodox divide in economics: if orthodoxy is in direct or indirect ways compelling heterodoxy to silence, this is wrong.⁷⁷ For heterodox economists, the notion that they could be in the right, and the mainstream in the wrong, is trivial. For orthodox economists, the situation is slightly different. Few, perhaps none, would submit that they are infallibly right. Yet they might not be sufficiently aware of the methodological implications of their fallibility. Only by subjecting one's ideas to fair competition can one have a hope of ensuring that the true belief will prevail.

⁷⁶ It should be noted that "truth" in this context is not meant to denote attainable knowledge that is ultimately undeniable. There is a presupposition in Mill's work that something indeed *is* true (regarding the real world), but this truth is something we can never be sure of having reached.

⁷⁷ Notionally, there is, of course, liberty of thought and expression in the discipline – but effectively there are silencing forces at work. We will return to this point in chapters 4 and 5.

No economist or group of economists, orthodox or heterodox, can place themselves in a position where they decide what is best for the whole community of practitioners, e.g. by implying that their own methodological position is a proper demarcation criterion. In Mill's first argument, this is simply because the dominant approach may be wrong, and all practitioners should be aware of this possibility. Arguments such as opposing views being marginal, or unscientific, are not valid conditions for exclusion, at least not without significant self-examination.

Both orthodox and heterodox economists must learn this lesson: progress is to be expected from the outside. If heterodoxy, in general, is regarded as a moving reservoir of potential future truth, then heterodox economics is a laboratory for envisioning the future state of economics. Recall the abstract definition of orthodoxy: "Orthodoxy means not thinking – not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness" (Orwell, 2003 [1949]: 61). The pluralist revolt is not against specific doctrines of orthodoxy, but against orthodoxy qua orthodoxy – not needing to think. Restricting scientific practice in a way that excludes heterodoxy inhibits truth pursuit, however confident in the established creeds adherents of orthodoxy may be. Restricting scientific practice in whatever way is a step in the wrong direction. It would imply that somewhere along the road infallibility has been assumed.

Heterodox economists calling for pluralism are to some extent guilty of this too. The "ontological view" appeals to open system ontology as demarcation criterion for economic science. Although the position admittedly gives rise to a wide range of approaches, any approach will have to be justified by reference to this ontology, which itself is fallible, leading to the scope of discourse being unjustifiably circumscribed.

Thus pluralism cannot exclude any particular approach, including formalist endeavours and open system theorizing alike, as it might – for all we know – be the right (or most fruitful) one. Moreover, this must apply at any point in time.

Second argument

The second scenario deals with the case where there is *some* truth to both the heterodox opinion and the established belief:

2. Secondly, though the silenced opinion be an error, it may, and very commonly does, contain a portion of truth; and since the general or prevailing opinion on any

subject is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied. (Mill, 1998: 59)

In this case, the silenced view has the potential of supplementing the prevailing belief, thus strengthening it. How does this apply to our discussion on economics?

One view is that each school of thought in some sense adds value to the field of economics; they deal with different aspects of the world and all have their limitations.⁷⁸ Especially on an “each form” view of reality, following James (1909), different approaches to different problems can be seen as complementary in the overall picture. Still, it seems here that Mill has a synthesis of different ideas in mind through some dialectic process. Does it mean that pluralism, in his view, cannot be an *ultimate end*? Mill does indeed have a conception of truth as single (Skorupski, 2007: 52; Mill, 1998 [1859]: 63), but I do not think this has any bearing on the defence of pluralism since we can never know that this truth has been reached.

Some commentators view mainstream economics as somewhat plastic in its response to challenges (Colander, 2000; Colander, Holt and Rosser, 2004), perhaps as absorbing the grains of truth that heterodox challenges bring forward. Alternatively, one could view the evolution of mainstream economics as an attempt to appease and contain heterodoxy by incorporating some heretical ideas and at the same time reinforcing the bulwark against radical opposition (Palley, 2013). This is illustrated by Lee’s (2009) distinction between “heresies” and “blasphemies” noted above, where the former are new ideas directed at some particular component of established doctrine that eventually gain acceptance, whereas the latter (heterodox economics) reject orthodox belief altogether without hope of being heard.⁷⁹ Somewhat similarly, Davis (2009) distinguishes between the old and the new heterodoxy, where the latter (signifying strands such as game theory, behavioural economics and complexity theory) is characterized by its attempts to change the mainstream from within, whereas the former challenge it from without. Yet it is possible that the mainstream’s relative receptiveness to new ideas stems largely from a need to protect itself, rather

⁷⁸ This is in line with Lawson’s position.

⁷⁹ The literary scholar Kenneth Burke (1957: 97) has a similar understanding of heresy: “I do not take a heresy to be a flat opposition to an orthodoxy (...) I take a heresy rather to be the isolation of one strand in an orthodoxy, and its following-through-with-rational-efficiency to the point where ‘logical conclusion’ cannot be distinguished from ‘*reductio ad absurdum*.’”

than the impartial quest for truth. It is well known that hegemony must renew itself in order not to be overthrown.

Heterodox economists would still claim that no *ad hoc* accommodation or supplement of truth is sufficient; they want the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. To the extent that different methodological approaches are excluded from discourse, some measure of infallibility is assumed on the part of the dominant view. Yet it should be emphasized that this problem lies not with the resulting orthodox doctrine as such, but the flawed dialogical process through which it has arisen.

On the other hand, it might seem obvious to heterodox economists that a portion of the truth regarding issues such as the trade cycle and financial instability is contained in Keynes' and Minsky's theories, and that once the crucial components thereof, such as the decisive role of radical uncertainty and the institutional set-up, are acknowledged, we will be set on the path to the whole truth. This is a dangerous illusion. Even though one might well, and legitimately, believe that refinements of such theories will lead to the truth, there is no way of knowing this, and the door must always be kept open for potential supplements and revisions from the outside.

Even if, say, the quantity theory of money provides a good predictor of the relationship between output and the quantity of money, and does well for the purposes at hand, insights into the nature of banking and endogenous money creation from Postkeynesians or Modern Monetary Theory might help mainstream theory to supply the remainder of the truth.⁸⁰ At the very least, the latter groups' insistence on money as credit originating in private banks should stimulate mainstream economists to increase the empirical content of their theories beyond what they have previously deemed necessary. Or, to take a different example: a significant part of Keynes' theory of effective demand was incorporated into the neoclassical framework post WWII, and although the Keynesian cosmology was not adopted, Keynes' *General Theory* shed light on the shortcomings of neoclassical theory and contributed to making it more successful, at least for a couple of decades.⁸¹

These passing considerations suffice to indicate that engagement with heretical ideas contributes to the advancement of knowledge through the framework

⁸⁰ See McLeay, Radia and Thomas (2014) for these insights from a central banking perspective.

⁸¹ Not to mention the significant shift in economic policies to which bastard Keynesianism gave rise, to the benefit of the workers of the world.

of the prevailing doctrines without fundamentally altering this framework. A comprehensive assessment of the current situation in economics cannot fully discredit the mainstream for its response to new ideas, although there are obvious constraining factors in force, such as the requirements of formalism – and dialogical shortcomings, which I will assess later.

Although heterodox economists may know the *truth* about certain aspects of the economy, they may not fully comprehend or acknowledge the merit of neoclassical theory in others. The sheer possibility of this is enough to call for continuous engagement with the current orthodox ideas in the event that current heterodoxy has taken its position. The truth probably lies with neither. In a world of monism, of one thing ruling them all, this is a difficult insight to grasp. As Mill (1998 [1859]: 52) states, “so long as popular truth is one-sided, it is more desirable than otherwise that unpopular truth should have one-sided asserters too”.

Thus pluralism cannot exclude *any* particular approach (a priori), as it might – for all we know – inform us about what the prevailing beliefs or theories do not account for, show us where they may be in the wrong and complement our understanding of the world.

Third argument

In the third scenario, the prevailing belief is the whole truth:

3. Thirdly, even if the received opinion be not only true, but the whole truth; unless it is suffered to be, and actually is, vigorously and earnestly contested, it will, by most of those who receive it, be held in a manner of prejudice, with little comprehension or feeling of its rational grounds. (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 59)

The received opinion must be vigorously challenged in order for its adherents to appreciate its grounds, and this can only occur through appreciating the grounds of the contesting opinion by which it is challenged. Hence a new dimension enters into the discussion, which transcends the realm of truth and falsehood into the domain of *thought* or *thinking*. I have hinted that this might be where orthodoxy begins to fail significantly: not needing to think. Indeed, this brings us to one of the main problems of economics: the manner in which economists are trained across the board.

I will return to this in chapter 6, but some initial thoughts are in place. Students of economics do not normally have a great methodological interest, but sometimes they do. Naturally, anyone who is learning a set of methods goes through a process of trying to appreciate its grounds, which can lead to questioning it. Economics lecturers often have a repertoire of responses on the map and the territory, the fruitfulness of simplification in modelling, on mathematics as a humble handmaiden for the limited power of reason, etc., designed, consciously or unconsciously, to nip the student's attempt to think in the bud and put him back in the comfort zone of maximizing $U(x,y)$ without second thoughts. When a lecturer, as he rarely but occasionally does (in my experience), presents conflicting ideas, he might conclude the story either with a joke or by invoking a form of Whig intellectual history (Negru, 2009), explaining that the best ideas and theories prevail in rational scientific discourse and hence we are progressing and will continue to do so. Faced with criticism, a common reply would be: "So what do you suggest we do instead?"

However, in the dialectic scheme of intellectual development, exposure to contesting approaches presented in their best form and contrasting them with the doctrine the teacher seeks to hand down, is the best vehicle for learning. By thus appreciating the grounds of the learned doctrine, the seeds of thinking are sown, ensuring that the profession will continue to reap its bounty in the future. Similarly, state of the art practitioners will reap the benefits from listening to the critic, even if he appears as a mere crank. Yet insofar as alternatives are blindly rejected, the fruits of negation *as such* are gravely misunderstood. The result, as Mill says, is that there is no attempt to understand contesting ideas on their own premises, which in turn means that the prevailing ideas are held in a prejudicial manner – armed with a battery of empty slogans, which seems to be loaded and aimed at the intruder from whichever point he tries to approach the citadel of orthodoxy:

A person who derives all his instruction from teachers and books, even if he escape the besetting temptation of contenting himself with cram, is under no compulsion to hear both sides; accordingly it is far from a frequent accomplishment, even among thinkers, to know both sides; and the weakest part of what everybody says in defence of his opinion, is what he intends as a reply to antagonists. It is the fashion of the present time to disparage negative logic – that which points out the weaknesses in theory or errors in practice, without establishing positive truths. Such negative

criticism would indeed be poor enough as an ultimate result; but as a means to attaining any positive knowledge or conviction worthy the name, it cannot be valued too highly. (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 51)

Even the Catholic Church employs a devil's advocate to raise all possible objections to canonization. In scientific discourse, this should be seen as a minimum, whereas Socratic self-examination is the ideal towards which we strive. For teaching purposes, this would mean the conscious effort to present alternative views in the best form in which they appear.

The silencing of doctrines hampers intellectual progress, but attempts at silencing opposing viewpoints may not be ultimately effective, as fruitful doctrines with firm believers will never perish. In this regard, the persistence of heterodoxy in the outskirts of economics, along with the fact that heterodox ideas arise at different times in different places, is an emblem of hope on its behalf.

Thus pluralism encourages opposing approaches, whether true or false. When challenged by opposing views, we are forced to reconsider the value and grounds of that which we believe, to *recollect* why we hold these truths to be evident.

Fourth argument

The fourth point is an extension of the third point; it appends to the role of thought the effects on the character of the individual, in which knowledge ultimately resides.

4. And not only this, but fourthly, the meaning of the doctrine itself will be in danger of being lost, or enfeebled, and deprived of its vital effect on the character and conduct: the dogma becoming a mere formal profession, inefficacious for good, but cumbering the ground, and preventing the growth of any real and heartfelt conviction, from reason or personal experience. (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 59)

Economists galore allude to the power of Smith's invisible hand. However, one rarely sees them exploring the meaning of this metaphor with reference to the context in which it was put forward. It is commonplace that such doctrines are passed on and repeated blindly, for each generation losing some of its original crux. If paradigmatic forces are at work, the discipline is formalized and assumes a fixed shape, what once

was a nuanced account solidifies and becomes fixed assumptions. It might even turn into the opposite of its own former nature (Kuhn, 1996 [1970]: 137-138). Mill states:

The fact, however, is, that not only the grounds of the opinion are forgotten in the absence of discussion, but too often the meaning of the opinion itself. The words which convey it, cease to suggest ideas, or suggest only a small portion of those they were originally employed to communicate. Instead of a vivid conception and a living belief, there remain only a few phrases retained by rote; or, if any part, the shell and husk only of the meaning is retained, the finer essence being lost. (Mill 1998 [1859]: 45)

Indeed, what would be a more apt depiction of the manner in which orthodox beliefs are instilled in orthodox scholars than “the dogma becoming a mere formal profession”? Kuhn’s (1996 [1970]) work echoes Mill’s arguments in pointing out the establishment of tradition, the non-questioning of the foundations for normal science, textbook instruction, the cumulative view of science, etc.⁸² According to Kuhn, these developments root out the time-consuming metaphysical questions and quests for firm ground associated with research in the pre-scientific stage. Hence they facilitate a range of puzzle-solving activities and thereby provide for a sort of scientific progress that is unviable without this framework.

Such paradigmatic forces are, as stated in the previous chapter, an obstacle to pluralism. We saw that Dow (2004) and Garnett (2006) were seeking to found a doctrine of pluralism upon this constraint. The empirical questions are whether Kuhn’s account is accurate for the situation in economics, and, if so, whether the pattern can be broken. My view is that pluralism is irreconcilable with Kuhnian normal science. And Mill gives us more hope than Kuhn with regards to the possibility of breaking down monism.

This fourth point touches upon the question of the nature of knowledge, whether it is in some significant sense internal to the person possessing it, or rather embodied in practice, that is, whether it does indeed have a “vital effect on the character and conduct”. For example, Wittgenstein (2003 [1953]) challenges the relation between following a rule and the inner experience of understanding the rule,

⁸² These are, arguably, all prevalent in modern-day mainstream economics, as I have argued elsewhere (Eliassen, 2016).

and undermines the idea that there is any necessary link here. Similarly, feeling that we know something, or aha moments we often experience in gaining new insights, may stand in no clear relation to what we know. This challenges the romantic flavour of Mill's conception.⁸³

According to Mill, a doctrine is not properly preserved if just stored collectively.⁸⁴ It needs to be continuously reflected upon by the individual. Truth, or scientific belief, is thus largely individual and is ultimately only valued as such. Knowledge that passes on from teacher to learner through training, is not adequately so. The doctrine is brought to life only by being contested, and its life lies in the dialectic of the enquiring mind.

More specifically, Mill's insistence on the individual's role in knowledge advancement downplays the social nature of knowledge that has been emphasized by philosophers and sociologists of science in the past few decades. Can the individual as an independent knower and pursuer of truth be preserved, given strong theory-ladenness of observation and socialization of scientific values and methods? Yes, is my conclusion – in a slightly modified form, to which I will return.⁸⁵

Mill himself was, as noted, torn between Romanticism and Enlightenment, and we are faced with something similar for our purposes. For the purposes of pluralism, a significant component of which consists in promoting the liberty of economists to follow their own inclinations even when this runs counter to conventional wisdom, rejecting the importance of the inner resonance with truth could represent a blow to the agenda. It would hand back the power to the authority of tradition, which, in any case, it must be admitted, conditions the language game and the world-view that informs the thought of the individual – fettered or not by the

⁸³ This romantic conception looks at knowledge, and truth, as somehow residing within, or resonating in, the individual. It has an affinity with both Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Plato's Socratic recollection. This raises some questions about our terminology in a post-positivistic setting: by "truth" (not "Truth"), are we really talking about phenomena such as "learning" and "understanding"? In some sense, educated individuals are viewed as the cradles, homes, of knowledge. Longino' (2002) proposal for preserving the individual's role given the social nature of knowledge, which I will return to in the next chapter, might resolve some of these questions.

⁸⁴ This runs counter to (e.g.) Popper (1970: 57), who claims that scientific knowledge "may be regarded as subjectless (...) as a system of theories on which we do work as do masons on a cathedral." Foucault (2002 [1966]), albeit from a different perspective, similarly views knowledge as disembodied from the knower.

⁸⁵ The short version is that the social environment is needed for the ratification of ideas, but the ideas originate within the individual, on the social background.

chains of orthodox procedure. In any case, the training of economists (which will be elaborated upon later) seems to pass over the required reflection on fundamentals. This is adverse to truth-pursuit, whether or not knowledge resides within the individual in any deep sense.

Mill warns us about the associated dangers. The doctrines (theories) lose their vital effect on character and conduct. This provides the stepping-stone for understanding how academic capabilities for truth-pursuit should be nurtured. On this view, which I will set forward, scientific activity should be based on the integration of the quest for knowledge with intellectual wellbeing and self-fulfilment. This can only be ensured (for all academics) when pluralism reigns.

Thus opposing doctrines and approaches should always be actively encouraged, because the lack of contestation leads to the received doctrine – even if it is the right one, which we in any case do not know – losing its meaning and its effect on the character of the scientist when we are not regularly contemplating its grounds. In Feyerabend's words:

Any ideology that breaks the hold a comprehensive system of thought has on the minds of men contributes to the liberation of man. Any ideology that makes man question inherited beliefs is an aid to enlightenment. A truth that reigns without checks and balances is a tyrant who must be overthrown and any falsehood that can aid us in the overthrow of this tyrant is to be welcomed. (Feyerabend, 1981a: 157)

To keep the truth alive is a rationale for pluralism, and in this, pluralism is advantageous for orthodox and heterodox alike.

Summary of Mill's arguments

According to Mill, there are four reasons for freedom of expression, pertaining to different truth statuses of the prevailing, orthodox belief:

- The orthodox belief may be wrong. Heresies and heterodox speculation of the past count as truth today. All views are always fallible.
- The orthodox belief might be partly true, and the heterodox view might similarly be partly true. Our understanding of any subject is complemented

when we explore what the grain of truth in the opposing view might be, even if this view is wrong or partly wrong.

- If the heterodox viewpoint is not explored, our evaluation of the alternatives is based on prejudice, and so is our belief in the orthodox view.
- If the alternative viewpoint is not explored, the truth that we uphold is a dead dogma and not a living truth; the truth is not rooted in the character of individuals. We are not aware of what the position actually entails and what its grounds are.

In sum, there is no justification for imposing restrictions on the exchange of ideas. Only through critical engagement with ideas – production of truth by collision with error – can knowledge progress. If there are tendencies at work, which keep critical discourse at bay, we must try to overcome them. Moreover, we must *encourage* and not merely *tolerate* alternatives, especially given the conservative biases of knowledge systems (such as the normal science described by Kuhn).

Surely, many academics would agree that Mill's outline of liberty of discussion depicts ideal scientific discourse. It is reasonable to assume that scientists are motivated by the quest for truth and that they are supporters of free and critical discussion thus outlined. It is also the case that some institutional and psychological factors may stand in the way for the realization of the ideal in practice. Indeed, my discussion in chapter 5 suggests that the current situation in the economics discipline is a far cry from the ideal.

In the current situation, many heterodox critics and mainstream economists alike seem to fail to comprehend the rationale for the other viewpoint (Freeman and Kliman, 2006). Following Mill, truth cannot suffer from open and earnest engagement with contrary ideas. Our position is strengthened regardless of the path subsequently chosen; either we hold the same opinion, but are more informed, or we progress towards a new stand and an enhanced understanding of the world. The message to the orthodox economist is thus: heterodox economics is useful for truth, whether or not it is itself truthful, and that is why we – you – need pluralism. Only those who are stakeholders in the prevailing theories, whether it is because of academic reputation or political/economic interest, have something to lose; science certainly does not.

It can be seen, then, how Mill's arguments cover both the conditions of pluralism that I have presented. First and foremost, Mill's argues for – given the

uncertainty of all knowledge – how pluralism, the active encouragement of opposing views, is conducive (if not prerequisite) to the advancement of knowledge. In addition, pluralism promotes the flourishing of individual academics, and their liberty to pursue truth in the ways they deem fit. In other words, pluralism leads to both truth and justice in the academy. At least this is what it is meant to do. However, the search for truth needs a firm grounding in the conditions under which *scientists as individuals* work. Therefore, in order to realize these aims, some institutional requirements must be met.

Before I turn to describing these, we need to comment on whether the position, as it has been presented so far, is viable. Does the abstract analogy between the economics profession and the liberty of thought and discussion in a century bygone withstand closer scrutiny?

Marqués and Weisman (2010) acknowledge Mill's *On Liberty* as a fruitful starting point for the justification of pluralism, and in particular his *fallibilism*⁸⁶ as the foundation for arguing that alternative views should always be encouraged. Their treatment only sketches Mill's relevance for pluralism, and they overemphasize individualism as the end towards which theoretical pluralism is a means. In Feyerabend's (1981b: 67) words, interpreting Mill, "pluralism is supposed to lead to *truth*".

Yet I agree that Mill "provides a promising foundation for grounding pluralists' claims" (Marqués and Weisman, 2010: 84), a foundation which I seek to build upon. Marqués and Weisman insufficiently adapt the analysis to scientific discourse, but they do raise an important point: the argument that pluralism is epistemically effective is not supported empirically. Similarly, Skorupski (2007: 11) asks "whether Mill's confidence in the process of fallible dialogue is legitimate". To the extent that the satisfaction of the epistemological criterion relies on this effectiveness, this is possibly a notable limitation to our thesis that must be borne in mind. It might leave us with little more than Screpanti's ethical principle.⁸⁷ Berlin

⁸⁶ Skorupski (2007: 8-9) dubs Mill's position "thinking from within", which is "unconstrained from any authoritative source external to it". Still, Mill does not think we have to be "presuppositionless". We can use starting points although we assert radical fallibility. Skorupski compares this to Nietzsche's philosophy, and also notes the similarity between Hegel and Mill in their "thinking from within".

⁸⁷ However, the point I am making regarding critical pluralistic discourse as the only judge of progress may be seen as circumventing this problem.

(1969: 187) notes that even if free discussion is a necessary condition for attaining truth, it may not be sufficient; the truth may remain at “the bottom of the well”.

For now I will refrain from contesting Mill’s views further and rather seek to elaborate on their implications. The next step is the attempt to relate Mill’s view to the philosophy of science proper, which shall be done by introducing the thought of Paul Feyerabend, whose arguments are in fact an application of “On the liberty of thought and discussion”.

The condition the condition is in

Pierre Bourdieu (1975: 31) asks: “What are the social conditions that must be fulfilled in order for a social play of forces to be set up in which the true idea is endowed with strength because those who have a share of it have an interest in truth”? Commenting upon this, D’Agostino (2014: 528) states: “This is an imperative that couldn’t even have been formulated in the ‘old epistemology’ that Kuhn and Feyerabend sought to overthrow.”

Bourdieu’s question is central given the post-positivistic climate in philosophy of science, in which belief in algorithms for scientific procedure is passé, and scientists’ adherence to the advancement of knowledge cannot be taken for granted, if either for influence from other interests or lack of a conducive environment. Hacking (1981: 1-2) sums up the tenets of the old epistemology or “image of science”, that now has been supplanted, as belief in the following nine components: 1) Realism, 2) Demarcation, 3) Cumulative science, 4) Observation-theory distinction, 5) Foundations, 6) Deductive structure and testing, 7) Meaning-invariance of terms, 8) Separation of contexts of discovery and justification and 9) The unity of science. Not all of these points were previously held by one single philosopher, rather they represent the “collage” of the pre-Kuhnian image of science, and all of them have subsequently been called into question.

Some of the main features of the post-positivistic insights include: a) the move from looser forms of theory-ladenness of observation to world-views/cosmologies determined by paradigms; b) there is no neutral observation language that can be used to report reality; c) meanings of scientific terms change depending on the framework, which is related to; d) incommensurability of approaches, i.e. that there is no neutral ground from which we can evaluate the merits of competing approaches/theories; e) knowledge and methodology can be tacit (Polanyi, 1999 [1966]) and are to a

significant extent unconsciously learnt; f) scientific knowledge is historically conditioned; g) scientific knowledge is socially conditioned; and h) the failure of verificationism and falsificationism leads to the particular problem of underdetermination of theory by the evidence (also known as the Duhem/Quine thesis). Naturally, there have been many developments in epistemology, as well as in sociology of science and science studies since Kuhn and Feyerabend entered the scene – but these factors mark a significant transition.

The problem of falsification is that, if a theory is falsified by a wrong prediction, we do not know which and how many of the hypotheses and ancillary hypotheses that are falsified (McCloskey, 1998 [1983]: 402-403). The underdetermination problem implies that many accounts, involving different background assumptions and causal relations, can explain the occurrence of a phenomenon, but the empirical evidence does not allow us to determine which theory is correct. “Data alone are consistent with different and conflicting hypotheses and require supplementation” (Longino, 2002: 126). This problem can be interpreted more or less radically. Longino (2002) states that the main implication of underdetermination is that we need to bridge the gap between the social and the epistemological dimensions of science, and we should investigate how the former serve and limit the latter. The most radical interpretations are associated with the Strong Programme in the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (e.g. Barnes and Bloor, 1982), which argues that scientific knowledge is determined more or less completely by conflicts of interest, in line with Bourdieu’s (1975: 21) claim that “all scientific practices are directed towards the acquisition of scientific authority”. Even if the turn of the epistemological tide allowed Bourdieu to phrase his question about the social conditions for truth, it opens up a range of possible responses.

The predicament is, however, interpreted quite radically by Feyerabend:

[T]he evidence that might refute a theory can often be unearthed only with the help of an incompatible alternative: the advice (...) to use alternatives only when refutations have already discredited the orthodox theory puts the cart before the horse. Also, some of the most important formal properties of a theory are found by contrast, and not by analysis. A scientist who wishes to maximize the empirical content of the views he holds and who wants to understand them as clearly as he possibly can must therefore introduce other views; that is, he must adopt a *pluralistic methodology*. He

must compare ideas with other ideas rather than with ‘experience’ and he must try to improve rather than discard the views that have failed in the competition. (Feyerabend, 2010: 13-14)

For Feyerabend, the demise of falsificationism leads, in the first instance, to the advocacy of a *pluralistic methodology*, and further yet, to *methodological anarchism* or *Dadaism*, in order to shed light on those weaknesses of theory that cannot be evaluated from within that theory.

Anything goes

There is a widespread fear of “anything” in the pluralism debate. The question haunts every author who encourages pluralism in economics: how do we avoid slipping into downright relativism, anarchy, a situation in which *anything goes*? It almost seems compulsory to make reservations against this in the literature.⁸⁸ I am going to argue that there is nothing wrong with *anything* here, and for that I need to clarify the slogan.

In his seminal work *Against Method* (hereafter *AM*), Paul Feyerabend (2010) carries Mill’s arguments for liberty of thought and discussion into the domain of philosophy of science. Mill’s essay is primarily a treatment of the freedom of religious or political belief. One might therefore think it not applicable to science, where secure knowledge might be more readily attainable. One explicit statement in Mill’s text supports application: “Even in natural philosophy, there is always some other explanation possible of the same facts; some geocentric theory instead of heliocentric, some phlogiston instead of oxygen” (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 51).

However, Mill (1994 [1836]) viewed economics as a science on a par with the natural sciences, although he admitted the difficulties arising from the complexity of

⁸⁸ For example, Dow (1997), Sent (2003) and Caldwell (1982) note this danger. Hodgson’s (1997: 149) particularly clearly formulates the fear: “Methodological anarchism means the tyranny of the strong, and the strongest are those currently in power. Hence, despite anarchistic appearances, the precept of ‘anything goes’ is ultimately conservative.” Screpanti (1997) and McCloskey (1994) are examples of authors who dismiss this problem, but whereas the former lacks prescriptive content, the latter downplays the institutional and power aspects. There may be a problem with anarchism thus conceived, but this is not what Feyerabend has in mind.

the economic realm.⁸⁹ And there is, indeed, controversy on whether *On Liberty* can be seen to apply to the realm of science at all. Mill's view of science in *System of Logic*, which is his main contribution to scientific method, has a more scientific tone. Staley (1999) seeks to reconcile the two works: "In [*System of Logic*], Mill offers us a way of thinking about rules in scientific methods that leaves room for the pluralism and openness of *On Liberty*" (Staley, 1999: 604). Jacobs (2003), however, argues that this reading of Mill is incoherent, and criticizes Feyerabend for having simply assumed the applicability of *On Liberty* to science:

The vitiating weakness of Feyerabend's interpretation of *On Liberty* is that *he* believes Mill's arguments apply to science, and he uncritically assumes Mill believed it too. Precedent established, Staley and other admirers of Feyerabend commit the same misinterpretation of Mill's *On Liberty*. On the basis of this misinterpretation they anachronistically misread *Liberty* as a defence of methodological and theoretical pluralism in science but, as shown in this paper, it is no such thing. (Jacobs, 2003: 210)

A somewhat different perspective is given by Gray (1998: vii-viii), who states that Mill in *On Liberty* was "applying the general conceptions advanced in the *Logic* to his central moral and political concerns, as they represented themselves to him as topical issues of his time", but that the endeavour of bringing together "the laws of mind and society" ultimately failed. Whether or not the two works are compatible with regard to science needs not, however, bear on the application of Mill's arguments in *On Liberty* for purposes of science as long as we differ from Mill's account of science in *System of Logic* (if this is indeed at odds with *On Liberty*) and align it with the ideas that are at the centre of his attention in the former book. It is legitimate to employ his arguments in *On Liberty* for our purposes provided we find the conditions for his arguments in this book to be fulfilled in the domain of interest, the requirement for which is being a "subject on which difference of opinion is possible" (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 41). Difference of opinion is obviously possible in science generally and in economics specifically. It is precisely the legacy of the post-positivistic turn that the

⁸⁹ His view is not far from that of Lionel Robbins (1945 [1932]), although the latter specifically defines economics as neoclassical economics of choice under scarcity, whereas Mill (1994 [1836]) still defines it in terms of production and wealth.

epistemological and methodological aspects of science should be looked at in a new way. Feyerabend's application of Mill's arguments is indeed appropriate.

Feyerabend's work is multifaceted and somewhat rhetorically opportunistic in the sense that he tends to invoke positions that are probably not his own views just for the sake of argument.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, Lloyd (1997) shows that there is a strong link between *On Liberty* and Feyerabend's work, and Feyerabend's endorsement of Mill is persistent throughout his writings: "The reasons [for exposure to the widest range of alternatives] were explained by Mill in his immortal essay *On Liberty*. It is not possible to improve upon his arguments" (Feyerabend, 1978: 86).

Feyerabend's theory of science is known for its methodological imperative "anything goes!" Critics of Feyerabend tend to accuse him of resorting to relativism (Feyerabend, 2010: 283-287). They tend to miss the basic point. Feyerabend's argument is a form of *reductio ad absurdum* where he takes as the premise that one universal methodological rule exists (or that some such rule should be sought for), and by pointing to the extensive use of different – and rule-breaking – approaches throughout the history of science, which we now regard as huge scientific achievements, he shows that no such rule exists and argues that the quest for it will inhibit scientific progress. So far he is in line with Caldwell (1982; 1988). The polemic twist follows: if there *were to be* one rule, it would be *anything goes*. In fact there is not, nor can there be, such a universal precept (Feyerabend, 2010: xiii). The misinterpretation should be rebuked: "I do not argue that we should proceed without rules and standards" (Feyerabend, 2010: 242). Or, more comprehensively:

It is clear, then, that the idea of a fixed method, or of a fixed theory of rationality, rests on too naive a view of man and his social surroundings. To those who look at the rich material provided by history, and who are not intent on impoverishing it in order to please their lower instincts, their craving for intellectual security in the form of clarity, precision, 'objectivity', 'truth', it will become clear that there is only one principle that can be defended under *all* circumstances and in all stages of human development. It is the principle: *anything goes*. (Feyerabend, 2010: 11-12)

⁹⁰ This, of course, can be seen as a practical demonstration of the pluralist argument itself. We need to bring up opposing views, even if we ourselves think they are wrong, in order to shed light on the weaknesses of established views. Moreover, detaching one's person from the argument is arguably the hallmark of intellectual honesty (although the opposite could also be argued).

In other words, only firm believers in The Scientific Method would be left astonished by the range of actual scientific practices. Add to this the key to understanding his procedure, the *reductio*: “An anarchist is like an undercover agent who plays the game of Reason in order to undercut the authority of Reason” (Feyerabend, 2010: 16). Caldwell, for example, who overall takes a sympathetic view of Feyerabend, seems to interpret him too literally:

[H]is suggestion that scientists accept the *nihilism of a nonmethodology* has aroused considerable debate. Many critics question whether the pursuit of *unrestrained theoretical pluralism* promises any progress (...) whether a *dadaist nonmethodology* accurately reflects the actual history of science. (Caldwell, 1982: 225, my emphasis)

McCloskey (1998 [1983]: 433-434) writes, to the contrary: “Surely, though, the alternative to blindered rules of modernism is not an irrational mob but a body of enlightened scholars, perhaps more enlightened when freed to make arguments that actually bear on the questions at issue.” Hacking further elucidates the problem:

Since the aphorism is often taken to be anti-science (...) we must emphasize that Feyerabend never meant for one minute that anything *except* the scientific method (whatever that is) ‘goes’. He meant that lots of ways of getting on, *including* the innumerable methods of the diverse sciences, ‘go’. (Hacking, 2010: xiii)

Yet even if Caldwell’s characterization of Feyerabend’s view as nihilist is inaccurate,⁹¹ he is right in raising the question of whether unrestrained pluralism promises progress.

Whether or not this is “relativism” depends on what one means by the term. Feyerabend states that it is relativism in the sense that conceptions of reality depend on the scientific framework, but “it differs from the philosophical doctrine by admitting failure: not every approach succeeds” (Feyerabend, 2010: 285). In other words, the fact that something might depend on something else, i.e. is relative to it,

⁹¹ As noted above, Mill’s position, and by extension Feyerabend’s, is not presuppositionless and nihilist even if it asserts radical fallibility.

does not mean that matters cannot and are not frequently resolved. Non-absolutism is not necessarily pure relativism (Longino, 2002).⁹²

The flipside of Feyerabend's approach is that his own position is difficult to identify – if indeed a consistent position emerges from his writings at all. At times he seems to exaggerate in order to bring home a negative point, at times he presents positive views. In any case, a general crux can be identified in Feyerabend's work, and among its components is the adherence to Mill's arguments in *On Liberty* – liberty of scientific thought and expression is, firstly, a humanitarian value: "He can be seen as trying to provoke us into protecting us from ourselves, and to highlight and actually *enact* the most fundamental principles by which human life is actually improved" (Lloyd, 1997: S407). And, secondly, it is a means for advancing truth:

Feyerabend's endorsement of Mill's claim amounts to a claim that the *process of scientific change*, when it occurs within the preferred context of a plurality of views and methods, is one that leads toward truth; it does not simply wander around the space of possibilities. (Lloyd, 1997: S398)

As we can see, Feyerabend is not only concerned with truth, he is concerned with justice in the academy as well, and he links it to the development of the individual's character and capabilities: "Proliferation of theories is beneficial for science, while uniformity impairs its critical power. Uniformity also endangers the free development of the individual" (Feyerabend, 2010: 17).

Feyerabend and pluralism

Feyerabend's position of "anything goes" comes close to the notion of pluralism entertained by some of its proponents in economics. As we shall see, he links it to criticism (like Caldwell and Samuels) and the development of the individual (like Garnett). At the same time he differs from most of the accounts, in particular the ontological view, because he is adamant that any attempt at "guiding" the discourse is unwarranted.⁹³

⁹² D'Agostino (2014: 520) suggests the term "epistemological particularism" to describe Feyerabend's position. Scientists have to recognize that their actual practice conforms to such particularism in order to embrace it fully, removing any remaining obstacles or doubts.

⁹³ For example, a precept such as "the methodology should conform to critical realist/open system ontology" is, however open, too restrictive; it is a search for the demarcation criterion.

We noted above that Feyerabend's (2010: 13-14) normative stand calls for a "pluralistic methodology", in order to increase the empirical content as well as understanding the grounds of the theories, since a theory can neither be directly compared to reality nor sufficiently evaluated from within. A pluralistic methodology in turn draws on "the principle of counterinduction". This stems from Mill's insistence that it is always beneficial to challenge the *status quo* of ideas.⁹⁴ The crucial point is that advances in science and understanding come from unexpected regions of inquiry. What is deemed as rational today was dismissed as deranged speculation in the past. Yet Feyerabend retains a core of Popper's (2005 [1935]; 1970) view in emphasizing criticism and proliferation – only Feyerabend has given up the possibility of verisimilitude and comparing theory with nature in any direct sense.

The major breakthroughs in the history of science have come as a result of the invention of completely new theories that cannot be grasped and appreciated within the existing scientific framework. They form part of a different "cosmology". Feyerabend's main example in *AM* is the Copernican revolution. A huge bulk of *AM* is an account of how Galileo used various means of persuasion on behalf of the Copernican theory, even though it was incoherent with the theoretical framework at his disposal. He did everything he could to give the theory a chance, to move towards a new cosmology, although he himself was allegedly aware of the inconsistency.⁹⁵ Looking back at the history of science, we only see failed theories – e.g. Ptolemaic astronomy – because they fail on our current terms. Shaking our heads, we are wondering: how could they be so wrong? The reality, according to Feyerabend, is that exactly the same applied to the Copernican theory in the time when Ptolemaic astronomy ruled the roost.

Thus, by clinging to the "rational" rules of science, we are neglecting our intellectual history. The history of science is normally told as the triumph of reason over superstition, disregarding the fact that the Copernican theory was unreasonable in its own time and that there were all too many reasons not to believe in it, given the general outlook of this period. This "Rationalism" is a drag on the liberal and tolerant academy; "a full democratization of science (...) is not in conflict with science. It is in

⁹⁴ Give astrology and alternative medicine a chance! We have nothing to lose. That is the message, and it is a provoking one, that sometimes undercuts the main message.

⁹⁵ Machamer (1971) contests Feyerabend's claim that Galileo's theories were breaking radically with the established methodology.

conflict with a philosophy, often called ‘Rationalism’, that uses a frozen image of science to terrorize people unfamiliar with its practice” (Feyerabend, 2010: xx).⁹⁶

Although Feyerabend seems to agree with Kuhn that anomalies might eventually overthrow the received view, he sees no reason to wait passively on a scientific revolution until the anomalies become too pressing, which in his view amounts to putting the cart before the horse (Feyerabend, 2010: 27). He adopts a radical variant of the theory-ladenness of observation; theories can seem to fit the facts, but the perspective that they offer biases them. In fact, “observation statements are not just theory-laden (...) but fully theoretical” (Feyerabend, 2010: 219).⁹⁷ This means, according to him, that the weaknesses of a theory can only be highlighted when contrasted with other theories. The *empirical content* of a theory is not available from within that theory. Hence light must be shed on it from without. We must proceed by contrast and not by analysis in order to understand the limits that the established conceptual framework imposes on us. An “external standard of criticism” is needed, “a set of alternative assumptions or (...) an entire alternative world, *we need a dream-world in order to discover the features of the real world we think we inhabit*” (Feyerabend, 2010: 15, original emphasis). The affinity with Mill’s line of argument is clear. We need to encourage opposing views – to point out shortcomings or direct faults, or if only to appreciate the grounds of the existing theories.

How can we relate this to the perceived situation in economics? Feyerabend claims that science operates with a “consistency condition”, which means giving precedence to established theories over new (incommensurable) ideas. This condition is in line with Kuhn’s normal science in yielding a methodologically conservative discipline, and in accordance with the depiction of mainstream economics as insisting on mathematical deductivism. The discipline is somewhat receptive to new ideas, but the ideas have to conform to certain standards. If we follow Dow or Lawson, the fact that new ideas must lend themselves to formalization is the consistency condition in current economics – the established, rational practice that cannot be called into

⁹⁶ It might be difficult to submit to Feyerabend’s insistence that rationalism is its own tradition. However, it has been shown by Erickson et al. (2013), that our conception of rationality has changed rather dramatically over the course of the last century, which indicates that our belief in the fixity of categories of thought is illusory. Foucault’s work gives another perspective that expounds the historic conditioning of scientific reason (e.g. Foucault, 2002 [1966]).

⁹⁷ Caldwell (1982: 81-83) surveys some of the philosophical criticisms that have been raised against this extreme meaning-variance and the possible contradictions it involves.

question. Thus economists fail to see their theories in the light that concepts such as unquantifiable, radical uncertainty throw upon them.

Feyerabend moreover ridicules “empiricists”, whom he characterizes as “worshippers of ‘facts’”:

This is how empiricists (...) who defend the consistency condition, being unaware of the complex nature of scientific knowledge (and, for that matter, of any form of knowledge) are voiding their favourite theories of empirical content and thus turning them into what they most despise, viz. metaphysical doctrines. (Feyerabend, 2010: 22)

This is a very interesting point in the light of mainstream economists’ reply to methodological criticism, which I have also personally experienced and been puzzled by in the wake of my book (Eliassen, 2016). A common response is that economics has become less *theoretical* and more *empirical* over the past few decades;⁹⁸ in fact, theory is just a humble handmaiden assisting us in the explanation of the bare facts before us. One wonders how anyone, more than half a century after Kuhn’s *Structure* was first published, can bluntly admit to such naïve empiricism – how one can apparently equate statistical data with raw sensory perceptions, the STATA file being like a fresh raspberry on your tongue. At any rate, Feyerabend explains the problems involved:

And so it is – provided facts *exist, and are available independently of whether or not one considers alternatives to the theory to be tested*. This assumption (...) I shall call the assumption of the relative autonomy of facts, *or the autonomy principle*. It is not asserted by this principle that the discovery and description of facts is independent of *all* theorizing. But it is asserted that the facts which belong to the empirical content of some theory are available whether or not one considers alternatives to *this* theory. (Feyerabend, 2010: 19, original emphasis)

⁹⁸ Holcombe (2008) claims, somewhat idiosyncratically, that general equilibrium theory and the now more fashionable “wholly empirical” economics represent two different methodologies, and that positivism represents a third, but I think Lawson and Dow are rather successful in grouping all mainstream efforts together as mathematical formalism – albeit at the cost of losing some finer shades and nuances.

Just collect the facts, the empiricists say. Bothering with alternatives stands in the way of progress and wastes time. The consistency condition removes unnecessary discussion (Feyerabend, 2010: 19). Similarly, the “empirical” economists of today keep heterodox theory at bay. However, the autonomous facts that the invoked line of defence presupposes simply do not exist.

In this situation, lacking external criteria of validity, the principle of counterinduction – the active invention and deployment of alternative theories – becomes a normatively superior scientific prescription. Lloyd (1997) demonstrates Feyerabend’s and Mill’s joint view on pluralism. She quotes Feyerabend (1981b: 67): “pluralism is supposed to lead to *truth*”. Pluralism is more conducive to the advancement of truth and formation of knowledge than conservative, monism-inducing, normal science. The “humanitarian” aspect of his argument has already been mentioned.⁹⁹ These two aspects are tightly knit together, and moreover have a broader relevance for society as a whole.¹⁰⁰

Mill’s views (...) are not only an expression of (...) liberal attitude; they also reflect their conviction that a pluralism of ideas and forms of life is an essential part of any rational inquiry concerning the nature of things. (...) Unanimity of opinion may be fitting for a rigid church, for the frightened or greedy victims of some (ancient, or modern) myth, or for the weak and willing followers of some tyrant. Variety of opinion is necessary for objective knowledge. And a method that encourages variety is also the only method that is compatible with a humanitarian outlook. (Feyerabend, 2010: 25)

Pluralism is conducive to truth; in fact, a diversity of views is needed for objective knowledge. What does he mean by objectivity?¹⁰¹ Feyerabend (2010: 30) mocks

⁹⁹ As against the claim that his view is immoral, Kuhn (1970) states that this is irrelevant, and by that probably refers to it being an empirical, and not a moral, question whether or not normal science exists.

¹⁰⁰ Science does not take place outside of society. It is a rationalist misconception that science should have any extraordinary role, according to Feyerabend (1978; 2010).

¹⁰¹ Daston (1992) distinguishes between ontological (correspondence) objectivity, mechanical (purely empirical) objectivity, and *aperspectival* objectivity, which means to be unbiased from “individual (or occasionally group) idiosyncrasies” (Daston, 1992: 597). Daston traces the historical emergence of *aperspectival* objectivity and its subsequent conflation with ontological and mechanical conceptions. *Aperspectival* objectivity can be found in the writings of moral philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and Adam Smith and only later became the ideal in scientific practice as a result of new forms of organization of scientific

illusions of objectivity, “i.e. independence from personal or group idiosyncrasies” and claims that attempts to formulate rules or standards without reference to traditions nevertheless are “*meant to be understood* in relation to a practice”. This, admittedly, applies to my analytical undertaking as well. Yet he claims “objectivity” for his statement that there is nothing to choose between different traditions, as long as we understand “rationalism” as one of these traditions; we are here faced with his method of *reductio* once again, a deconstructive effort that turns “rationalism” against itself.

This, however, gives rise to the problem of standards and the danger of resorting into da-da:

How shall we localize faults and carry out changes? Don’t we need a measure that is independent of science and conflicts with it in order to prepare the change we want to bring about? And will not the rejection of rules and standards that conflict with science forever prevent us from finding such a measure? (Feyerabend, 2010: 223)

Do we need some kind of “structuring”, like Dow calls for? Feyerabend juxtaposes two possible positions on this matter, a “guided exchange” and an “open exchange”:

A guided exchange adopts ‘a well-specified tradition and accept[s] only those responses that correspond to its standards. If one party has not yet become a participant (...) he will be badgered, persuaded, “educated” until he does – and then the exchange begins.’ ‘A *rational debate*’, I continue, ‘is a special case of a guided exchange.’ In the case of an open exchange ‘the participants get immersed into each other’s ways of thinking, feeling, perceiving to such an extent that their ideas, perceptions, world-views may be entirely changed – they become different people participating in a new and different tradition. An open exchange respects the partner whether he is an individual or an entire culture, while a rational exchange promises respect only within the framework of a rational debate. An open exchange has no organon though it may invent one; there is no logic though new forms of logic may emerge in its course.’ In sum, an open exchange is part of an as yet unspecified and unspecifiable practice. (Feyerabend, 2010: 283-284).

communication in the nineteenth century. Feyerabend seems, in his curious way, to simultaneously undercut and embrace a form of aperspectival objectivity.

A “guided exchange” represents the normal science of Kuhn and resembles descriptions of mainstream economics in which formalism (or any other methodological core) works as the consistency condition. “Rational debate” might be what Dow is demanding. It provides the potential for intellectual mobility and progress, but – by being rational in the sense that it conforms to our current available conceptions (say, open system ontology) – it is constrained, and does not allow for revolutionary change. To secure an open exchange, we must admit and actively assert the precariousness of the beliefs we uphold.¹⁰²

Is it not sufficient that the debate takes place within the framework of “rational debate”, at least on a rather broad notion of rationality that incorporates all we can possibly conceive of as economics? Perhaps we should also take into account that which we cannot conceive of – is this what an open exchange denotes? In any case, this is an obstacle that we still have not surmounted: how can we establish standards that are irrespective of particular traditions and ensure that pluralism can be implemented, and its degree of realization evaluated?

For Feyerabend, the “structure” of discourse cannot be imposed from the outside by law-decreeing methodologists or by any particular group or individual within. Rather, the protective structures emerge through open discourse (Feyerabend, 2010: 238). Hence Dow’s attempts at providing for “structured pluralism” are mistaken in that she is not (nor is any other methodologist) in a position to lay down the pathway of scientific discourse. She is, however, right that some kind of structure is needed. In line with the abstract move, however, the only structure we can hope to establish must be abstracted from particular ontological and methodological viewpoints. It must refer to discussion as such, and institutions that support critical discourse. Given that the right preconditions are in place, any remaining structures have to arise through discourse itself.

Thus Feyerabend’s claim that we need “protective structures” as they emerge through an open exchange is in line with our refusal to structure pluralism *a priori*. A Feyerabendian foundation for pluralism is then salvaged insofar as we do not foreclose the outcome of pluralism by ordering schools of thought according to some

¹⁰² As against Lawson, Feyerabend (1978: 81) would say: “classifying traditions as true or false (...) means projecting the point of view of other traditions upon them. Traditions are neither good nor bad – they just are. They obtain desirable or undesirable properties only for an agent who participates in another tradition and projects the values of this tradition upon the world.”

methodological criteria. The required degree of “objectivity” is then safeguarded by letting the ratification process of social scientific discourse determine what counts as knowledge at any given time (Longino, 2002), as long as we bear in mind that the norms for discourse that we devise are meant to be interpreted in relation to practice.

Feyerabend classifies his position, not as “idealism” (which means that reason governs research, contextual or not), nor “naturalism” (meaning research governs reason), nor “naïve anarchism” (*anything goes* is actually the asserted principle). His is a combined approach: an interactionist view of reason and practice (Feyerabend, 2010: 242-243). I think this resonates with most of the post-positivist philosophers and sociologists, that reason is somehow entrenched in practice. Yet many authors who emphasize the social construction of knowledge ultimately struggle when confronted with questions of standards. We need to grapple further with this issue in the next chapter. It is of the utmost importance if we are hoping to establish a neutral – objective – case for pluralism that can have a bearing on practical matters.

Our normative arguments can only improve if we acknowledge what actual scientific practice looks like:

Thus all we can say is that scientists proceed in many different ways, that rules of method, if mentioned explicitly, are either not obeyed at all, or function at most like rules of thumb and that important results come from the confluence of achievements produced by separate and often conflicting trends. The idea that “scientific” knowledge is in some way peculiarly positive and free from differences of opinion’ is nothing but a chimaera. (Feyerabend, 2010: 253)

Importantly, science is – like any other discourse – subject to differences of opinion, of which all are fallible. The illusion that scientific knowledge is in some way exempted from this universal fact should be fought.

“Anything goes” is not dangerous, firstly, because it has been misinterpreted as “naïve anarchism” and, secondly, because of the lack of meta-principles, as Samuels (1997a: 68) phrased it, anything *necessarily* goes anyway. Feyerabend upholds principles of criticism and credentials. However, whereas Samuels states that each scientist should adopt his own approach, Feyerabend more radically states that each scientist should adopt a pluralistic methodology, in order to increase the empirical content of her theories.

This “pluralistic methodology” is a remnant of Feyerabend’s early work, which entails specific recommendations for scientists to be empiricist and realist (Preston, 1997: 136-139). This is in line with Dow’s (2008) understanding of a “pluralistic methodology” as allowing or encouraging a range of approaches and methods, which could still be monistic at the meta-methodological level – excluding monist methodologies. However, in *AM*, Feyerabend’s stance has evolved into “methodological pluralism” (or “anarchism” or “Dadaism”). This is in line with Dow’s pluralism at the meta-methodological level; it is “methodological pluralism” in the broad sense of McLennan (1995) and Samuels (1997a). Yet Feyerabend upholds two main components of methodological pluralism, namely “the principle of tenacity” and “the principle of proliferation” (Preston, 1997). The former calls for scientists to devote themselves to the elaboration of a single view as its full strength only emerges with time, whereas the latter encourages them to always explore alternatives and invent new ideas. This places a great, potentially conflicting, demand on scholars that must be dealt with in educational terms.¹⁰³

Moreover, we must bear in mind that Feyerabend was primarily concerned with the natural sciences. It seems that the natural sciences have a stronger tendency to methodological conformity than the social sciences (a fact that Kuhn (1970) attributes to their maturity), and hence, as an *empirical* matter, a genuine pluralism might lead to a greater de facto plurality of approaches in economics than in, say, physics.

Yet pluralism, on this view, is not primarily a safeguard of *horizontal* diversity, which allows each and every scientist to pursue the approach she believes to be most fruitful. The legitimate duration of any particular theory or school of thought is called into question. Pluralism promotes the change of ideas, in a *vertical* pursuit of truth. It is not as preoccupied with tolerating existing opinions as promoting new ones. The outcome may well be unity and conformity – for the time being. Yet every

¹⁰³ For example, Hodgson (2009: 148-149) states we should not entertain two contradictory thoughts at the same time: “But we should not tolerate the existence of inconsistent ideas within our own heads. The role of diversity is not to sanctify or foster contradiction. (...) The policy toward science must be pluralistic and tolerant, but science itself cannot be so. Pluralism does not mean that ‘anything goes’.” The latter statement has been rebuked by the foregoing discussion, and pluralism should in a sense foster contradiction. Yet Hodgson points to a challenge we must take seriously; economists must be equipped to commit themselves to particular views, provided that this rests on reasoned choice.

individual is called upon to unchain himself from the pride and vanity he has invested in his “own” beliefs and theories.

Only an assertive normative encouragement of constantly challenging established beliefs can help us overcome psychological obstacles to progress. Is this too visionary, too high a demand on individuals?¹⁰⁴ Mill explains that the proper environment is indeed rare:

When any people has made a temporary approach to such a character, it has been because the dread of heterodox speculation was for a time suspended. Where there is a tacit convention that principles are not to be disputed; where the discussion of the greatest questions which can occupy humanity is considered to be closed, we cannot hope to find that generally high scale of mental activity which has made some periods of history so remarkable. (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 39)

However difficult, the dread of heterodox speculation (to the extent that this exists in economics) must be overcome. The establishment of a pluralistic methodology as a norm at the level of individual scientists would certainly be in line with the ideal of science as the disinterested pursuit of truth. It encourages us to follow our inclinations, draw the full consequences of them, before turning to contest these results. Even if the great intellectual minds are rare, we should aim to make the whole of the profession – in our case, the economists – capable of this type of intellectual inquiry.

Where is the world?

The aim here is not to defend the totality of Feyerabend’s position, but to see in which direction a Millian form of pluralism takes us when applied to scientific discourse. Yet one important, or widespread, concern would be that a Feyerabendian position gives up on scientific realism (Sankey, 1994). This is not the case; at least it is not that straightforward. Early in his career, Feyerabend broke with positivism and became a committed realist (Feyerabend, 2010: 271; Preston, 2012). Although this could be seen to persist throughout his work, it is not obvious what his position is. It is certainly not “naïve realism”. Neither is it fully-fledged constructivism. We are

¹⁰⁴ Is it reserved for extraordinary individuals, such as Keynes, who is attributed with having stated: “when the facts change, I change my mind”?

located somewhere in-between. Hoyningen-Huene, Oberheim and Andersen (1996: 138) suggest that the position (of Feyerabend and also Kuhn) be called “non-realism”. That is, we do not have access to an observation-independent reality. The world is, in a way, half-created by us (Bronk, 2009). Hoyningen-Huene et al. (1996: 139) suggest that we have “object-sided moments” and “subject-sided moments” that jointly constitute reality or the “world”. The following quote from Kuhn illustrates the complexity of the issue: “(...) though the world does not change with a change of a paradigm, the scientist afterward works in a different world” (Kuhn, 1996 [1970]: 121).

While we can come up with a range of different explanations for phenomena, from different methodological starting points, we cannot come up with just *anything*. The realm of experience is not only regulated by our minds, but by “the reality out there” – in some sense, which seems intuitively correct and perhaps obvious. Feyerabend (2010: 285) lends support to this interpretation when he states that reality depends on the approach taken; yet some approaches fail. Pickering (1990) states this point very well: science progresses through resistance and accommodation. Some theories will not work because the underlying reality does not allow it. Combined with the inaccessibility of reality, this means that *many things* go – but not just anything.¹⁰⁵ Science progresses as it accommodates to the problems that arise through the world’s resistance.

Hoyningen-Huene et al. (1996: 139) further suggest that there is “meta-incommensurability” between this position and naïve versions of realism; the meaning of concepts such as “the world” is not the same for Feyerabend and the naïve realist, leading the latter to accuse the former of being opposed to realism. However, we can have a realist commitment while at the same time acknowledging the impossibility of fulfilling this in any ontologically objective way, acknowledging, that is, that the indeterminacy of knowledge in fact means that a realist commitment should be accompanied by a pluralist attitude seeking to continually enrich our accounts of “the world”. Reality is not what encourages thinking; thinking encourages thinking about reality.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ This point has an affinity with the underdetermination problem (Longino, 2002).

¹⁰⁶ In his critique of Lawson, Davidsen (2009) calls for an intermediate position between positivism and social constructivist idealism – where we believe that the world exists independently of us, but we do not have access to it by any means. I think this alternative already exists in the nonrealism of Feyerabend and Kuhn, the consequences of which are

Another objection might be that Feyerabend lacks a clear demarcation line. What is the hallmark of science? Insofar as “realist commitment” is a contender, I have argued that this is preserved. With regard to theoretical work, Feyerabend states that scientists should be normative realists (Oberheim, 2005), explained by Preston (2012): “According to Feyerabend, only by endorsing scientific realism can the scientist cleave to a methodology which would consistently bring out the (conceptually) *revolutionary* potential of scientific theories”.

Is a demarcation line needed at all? Yes, but it is not the methodologist’s job to draw it. Sound scientific practice is enforced through critical scientific discourse. Attempts at delimiting science by reference to “rationality” run into problems:

Science may be complex, they say, but it is still ‘rational’. Now the word ‘rational’ can either be used as a collecting bag for a variety of procedures (...) or it describes a general feature found in every single action. I accept the first definition, but I reject the second. In the second case rationality is either defined in a narrow way that excludes, say, the arts; then it also excludes large sections of the sciences. Or it is defined in a way that lets all of science survive; then it also applies to love-making, comedy and dogfights. There is no way of delimiting ‘science’ by something stronger and more coherent than a list. (Feyerabend, 2010: 258)

Reason is not some subliminal enterprise or capacity. Science is not one thing, but a collage of many different practices (Preston, 2012; Hacking, 2010). Rather than *unity* of science, we have *disunity* of science. Feyerabend may go too far in putting science on a par with other kinds of discourses. So, in this regard, the question of the hallmark of science remains – not because there is a specific hallmark, but because there are some things that are not science. For Feyerabend, the question is wrongly posed. Nevertheless, this proves a challenge when we want to establish criteria for evaluating discourse and implementing pluralism. This is the topic of the next chapter.

Is normal science normal?

A further problem is whether or not the operation of monistic normal science can be avoided in economics. It is hard to determine whether Feyerabend’s account of

further illuminated by authors such as Pickering (1990) and Longino (2002) – the latter of which we will revisit in the next chapter.

scientific progress is a more accurate description of the state of affairs than those who seek to delineate some true nature of science, and he himself points out that his use of historical examples can only *support* his view, not *establish* it (Feyerabend, 2010: xix). Is it just a matter of faith whether we follow Feyerabend or Kuhn as to the necessity of normal science?

The normative and descriptive modes are entangled here. Feyerabend criticizes Kuhn for having them confused; Kuhn describes a normal science paradigm as what we have to supplant to achieve progress, yet normal science is the means to achieve this end as it gives rise to anomalies that lead to scientific revolutions (Feyerabend, 1970: 201-202). So why not just encourage revolutionary science through proliferation straight away? According to Feyerabend, normal science is neither descriptively accurate¹⁰⁷ nor normatively desirable. “Such an enterprise is not only ill-conceived and non-existent; its defence is also incompatible with a humanitarian outlook” (Feyerabend, 1970: 210).

Kuhn replies that his account of normal science is indeed descriptively correct. “But that does not imply that scientists ought not aim at perpetual framework-breaking, however unobtainable that goal. ‘Revolutions in permanence’ could name an important ideological imperative” (Kuhn, 1970: 242-243). According to Kuhn himself, he shares Popper and Feyerabend’s ideals of criticism, but thinks they are unworkable. We would then have to enable economists to follow such ideals to the *largest possible* extent. The disagreement is primarily on the extent.

The question is, then, whether or not there is evidence *against* normal science being the irrevocable norm of scientific practice in economics. It is customary to bring up the “interwar pluralism” in the US as an example to the contrary (e.g. Morgan and Rutherford, 1997; Lee, 2009). Can the developments since then be regarded as a necessary maturation of the paradigm? Not if the discourse is *obviously* flawed. I will investigate this in the ensuing chapters, thereby informing the question of the normality of normal science. At any rate, we cannot do much more than ensure that discourse is not flawed; the degree of plurality apart from what an ideal standard for discourse would demand, is an empirical matter. Pluralism does not count the amount of approaches; it describes a mode of scientific operation.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ He justifies this by pointing to how classical physics was abolished.

¹⁰⁸ The normative/descriptive distinction is related to another distinction, namely between the participant and the observer, which Feyerabend invokes. The practicing scientist, or

Towards a happy dismal science

Feyerabend calls for the constant encouragement of opposing views, but he also points to the ethical nature of the scientific community and the importance of individual development:

It seems to me that the happiness and full development of an individual human being is now as ever the highest possible value. This value does not exclude the values which flow from institutionalized forms of life (...). It rather encourages them *but only* to the extent to which they can contribute to the advance of some individual. (...) What is excluded is the attempt to ‘educate’ children in a manner that makes them lose their manifold talents so that they become restricted to a narrow domain of thought, action, emotion. Adopting this basic value we want a methodology and a set of institutions which enable us to lose as little as possible of what we are capable of doing and which force us as little as possible to deviate from our natural inclinations. (Feyerabend, 1970: 210)

Hereby, Feyerabend points to the next step for this thesis, which is to discuss the “set of institutions” conducive to critical discourse. A fundamental requirement for this is that the individual scientist is capable of partaking in such discourse. In this way, Feyerabend anticipates the rest of this thesis, as I later will discuss the proper education of economists (chapter 6), in addition to spelling out the main ethical aim: the flourishing of the individual academic, the realisation of what they are “capable of doing”.

In Feyerabend’s (1970: 210) words, the combination of proliferation of ideas and the tenacity in critically developing them “raise[s] their defence to a higher level of consciousness”. First of all, proliferation seems concomitant with critical thinking. Moreover, the individual’s inclinations are nurtured, suppressing no endeavour *a priori* on methodological grounds. Criticism, which is achieved through contrasting

economist, has to make a decision when she encounters some new theory: “This is a strange book indeed – should I take it seriously?” (Feyerabend, 2010: 225). The observer, however, wants to explain change and does not have to make decisions of this sort. The *pluralist* is often a heterodox economist, that is, a participant in the realm of theory. Thus she cannot fully detach herself from the on-going theoretical debates. She has to interact with them, and make theory choices. This conflation of roles must be overcome in the abstract justification of pluralism. When we advocate for pluralism, we are observers of discourse and not participants. This distinction is, I think, essentially the same as Dow’s distinction between advocating for pluralism at one level and still taking a particular methodological stance as individuals.

alternatives, is achieved thereby. The challenge is to institutionalize criticism. The individual scientist's paramount role in this is highlighted, the way in which theories, knowledge, truth, resides – lives – within the individual's mind, or, in Feyerabend's Hegelian turn of phrase, "consciousness".¹⁰⁹

Together, Mill and Feyerabend provide the epistemological justification for pluralism; given inescapable epistemic uncertainty, the proliferation of opposing views is a paramount means to truth advancement. Moreover, they are both motivated by profound concerns for justice and liberty. They clearly encourage critical thinking and a range of ideas, but although Feyerabend identifies the institutional problem, neither of them sufficiently states the institutional requirements. In other words, they liberate us from the tyranny of received opinion; but they do not state how this liberty can be safeguarded. The stage is set for a more thorough depiction of the pluralist (and "humanitarian") academic community, especially with a view to the economics discipline, in which the individual economist can flourish.

Persons of genius, it is true, are, and are always likely to be, a small minority; but in order to have them, it is necessary to preserve the soil in which they grow. Genius can only breathe freely in an *atmosphere* of freedom. Persons of genius are, *ex vi termini*, *more* individual than any other people – less capable, consequently, of fitting themselves, without hurtful compression, into any of the small number of moulds which society provides in order to save its members the trouble of forming their own characters. (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 72)

¹⁰⁹ In other words, there is a vast gulf between this position and one that draws on Kuhn when it comes to the nature and *location* of knowledge – whether or not it is disembodied from individuals.

Chapter 4. Procedural standards for pluralism

Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust. (Rawls, 1999 [1971]: 3)

Truth and freedom either go together hand in hand or together they perish in misery. (John Paul II, 1998: 78)

In the previous chapter, I looked into the merit of dissent and argued that the encouragement of alternative and opposing views are instrumental to the pursuit of truth and the advancement of knowledge. It does not suffice just to point out this fact and assume that this point will be grasped, and that once it is grasped, the problem of monism in economics will be solved overnight, as Freeman and Kliman state:

Our experience leads us to conclude that, in order to secure the implementation of rules of pluralistic scholarly engagement, a strategy of persuasion alone is insufficient, those who benefit from different, suppressive norms of conduct will not be persuaded to follow them voluntarily. (Freeman and Kliman, 2006: 50)

My epistemological arguments have pointed to the need for continual *criticism* and the encouragement of alternatives. What remains is to describe the institutional environment conducive to such scientific practice. How do we institutionalize¹¹⁰ criticism? There is a range of institutional factors, power relations, etc. that stand in the way of realizing pluralism. The removal of these barriers, and the approximation to the ideal of pluralism, is a question of institutional reform (in a broad sense). Most important, perhaps, is the accommodation of opposing views, which must be nourished through critical minds, and critical minds are to a large extent formed by means of education.

¹¹⁰ I use this term in the following sense: “The sociological concept of ‘institutionalization’ pertains to normatively expected behaviour: institutions let members of a social collectivity know what behavior they may demand of one another when and in which situations” (Habermas, 1997: 177).

An answer to these concerns, aimed at describing how disinterested truth-pursuit can be safeguarded in economics, is the ultimate aim of this theoretical inquiry. On the conception drawn up above, truth has to resonate within the individual, and the individual must be allowed to pursue truth in the way she is inclined to. Yet these inclinations do not arise from within the individual; to a large extent they are socially shaped. The individual's freedom must be preserved in the environment that socially conditions her.

However, there is another reason why we need to look into the institutional arrangements of the economics discipline (or academia as such). In addition to the pursuit of truth, I have spoken of the need for *justice* in the academy. It might not be immediately clear that this notion belongs in the present discussion. Yet this is the standard that the ethical component of the calls for pluralism appeals to, just as the epistemological component appeals to truth.

Truth and justice, in conjunction, should form the core of academic activities – indeed of all human undertakings, if we are to listen to John Rawls (1999 [1971]: 4): “Being first virtues of human activities, truth and justice are uncompromising”. Luckily, as we shall see, these two virtues go hand in hand. In this chapter, I will investigate the requirements for their institutional realization; in the next chapter, I will evaluate to what extent they are approximated in economics.

Political science?

Having drawn on John Stuart Mill in the previous chapter, it is worthwhile starting on this course with his definition of justice: “Justice implies something which is not only right to do, and wrong not to do, but which some individual person can claim from us as his moral right” Mill (1998 [1861]: 185). Mill is making an important distinction that separates out justice as a distinct branch of morality, as opposed to matters of “generosity” or “beneficence”, i.e. that the person has a right to something. Injustice can then involve the deprivation of this right, or the failure to provide it.¹¹¹ How does this translate onto the academic scene?

I have stated above that heterodox (and orthodox) economists have the right to access discourse, the right to be taken seriously and the right to pursue truth in the

¹¹¹ We have a moral obligation to educate each other about the good life, to encourage and persuade one another to choose the better option – but never tell anyone that they should not do what they themselves want, Mill (1998 [1859]: 84) states further.

way they deem fit. So far this invokes tolerance pluralism (e.g. Lee, 2009; 2011a). It involves a positive obligation on the gatekeepers of the discipline to secure this right. Yet it does raise some problems as to the limits of the field; does everyone have the right to partake in discourse on an equal footing? Moreover, mere toleration does not suffice to guarantee the proliferation I called for in the previous chapter. Furthermore, Garnett (2011) points out, as against Lee, that the emphasis on rights overshadows the concomitant obligations. Do scientists have an *ethical* obligation to proliferate theories and approaches, and how are the epistemological and ethical dimensions linked in this respect? Regarding Mill, it is interesting to note that he speaks of liberty of *discussion*, not liberty of *expression*. Whereas expression is an individual act, discussion is a two-sided, symmetrical affair that places demands on both speaker and hearer. What are the obligations of senders and receivers of criticism in scientific discourse? I will seek to illuminate these problems in the following.

In speaking of justice and liberty, we have stridden into the realm of political philosophy. This calls for a brief investigation of the links (which we touched upon in the introduction, cf. McLennan (1995)) between political pluralism and scientific or methodological pluralism.

In the contemporary methodological climate, the quest for the Truth has been deemed a futile endeavour. In a somewhat similar way, contemporary political philosophy has moved beyond the quest for the Good. We are living in a world of “de facto pluralism” of values (Habermas, 1997: 60). It seems to be widely acknowledged that there are many ends we might equally well pursue in our lives; there is no ultimate means by which we can arbitrate between them. For these reasons John Rawls (1999 [1971]) sought to formulate a “post-metaphysical” theory of justice. In so doing, he aimed at a procedural rather than a substantive theory, seeking to avoid claims about the Good beyond what could be consensually arrived at between rational humans. In this way, there is a structural similarity between the post-positivistic scientific methodology, giving rise to methodological pluralism, and the post-metaphysical political philosophy, seeking conceptions of justice that can accommodate the fact of value pluralism.

However, political pluralism invokes a plurality of ends, while methodological pluralism calls for plurality as a means. Whereas the former asserts the plurality of human goods, the latter is, although it does value plurality in the abstract, ultimately agnostic as to the extent that practitioners should tend to agree on the best

methodological principles at any given time. What is important is that there is scope for the advancement of alternatives and, to a certain extent, that academics themselves engage in this. Plurality in the numeric sense is irrelevant. However, methodological pluralism still holds the dignity of the individual academic as sacrosanct. Yet all these individuals ultimately have the same aim: to pursue truth. Therein lies the main difference between the two forms of pluralism.¹¹²

Although I have tried to abstract from current orthodoxy and heterodoxy in the justification, I do not take lightly concerns that a significant part of the dominance of current theory is explained by power and ideology. The scientific sphere is not, of course, detached from society at large. In fact, it is probably more determined by it than one might like to think. To some extent, the power relations in society are reflected in the power relations in scientific disciplines. For now, these will be kept at the back of our heads, as I seek a conception of how pluralism can be institutionalized by reference to the discipline's internal, and not external, workings.

Two concepts of liberty

Pluralism is a truly liberal doctrine. I have so far associated pluralism with the liberty of thought and discussion, in Mill's conception. It is necessary to put his notion of liberty into context. Mill is one of the most famous exponents of so-called negative liberty – freedom understood as non-interference. This is freedom *from* – from undue external influence, from the tyranny of received opinion, from censorship, etc. The justification of pluralism put forward in the previous chapter was implicitly based on Mill's conception of liberty; there are no legitimate grounds upon which my freedom to pursue any methodology I like can be interfered with by any external agency. And, indeed, I even went further in asserting that the encouragement of such methodological diversity is for the better. The problem is only that the negative liberty that we have asserted (and radicalized in the form of encouraging theory

¹¹² It might be objected, as against this political analogy, that the purpose of science is not to serve political ends, but rather to instrumentally forward truth. Two counter-arguments can be made. Firstly, does science not, if it is to live up to its image as a flag-bearer of modern civilization, have an obligation to practice the values we uphold as the essence of modern society? Perhaps more importantly, there is no reason to presume that there is a trade-off between academic liberty and justice, on the one hand, and the efficiency of truth pursuit, on the other hand. I have in the previous chapter presented arguments for why the opposite holds – even if the evidence as to whether pluralism is epistemically effective is inconclusive.

proliferation) is not a workable principle without a certain framework in which it can operate.

We do not exercise freedom in a vacuum. There is no *de jure* prohibition of heterodox ideas in the academy today; if heterodox economists are excluded (a fact which will be established later) this is due to a *de facto* obstacle as a result of intellectual malpractice. This suggests that the freedom to assert one's ideas and have them discussed can only be exercised in a community of educated humans who share certain dialogical values.

Isaiah Berlin's famous essay "Two Concepts of Liberty", in which he distinguishes between "negative" and "positive" liberty, provides a seminal discussion of the problems involved. The negative sense of the term is involved in answering the question "What is the area within which the subject (...) is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?" (Berlin, 1969: 121-122). On the other hand, the positive sense answers the question "What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?" (Berlin, 1969: 122). The distinction is normally understood as one between "external" and "internal" constraints on freedom. Although Berlin evokes the dichotomy of "freedom from" and "freedom to", which are notionally only two sides of the same coin, the positive notion is indeed of a different quality, and is best understood as freedom as self-realization, as Quentin Skinner (2002) highlights.

We can take a first glimpse of what Berlin (1969: 123) says on negative freedom: "The criterion of oppression is the part that I believe to be played by other human beings, directly or indirectly, with or without the intention of doing so, in frustrating my wishes. (...) The wider the area of non-interference the wider my freedom." On this notion, liberty is a matter of degree. We cannot say that at this or that point, freedom is achieved, but we could have more or less freedom. Perhaps more relevant for our purposes is Berlin's "criterion of oppression", which encompasses indirect and unintended interference. It could be evaluated to what extent this form of oppression is taking place in the discipline of economics – and whether heterodox economists are thus lacking a degree of liberty that orthodox economists possess. A difficult question arises: what are "my wishes"? There immediately seems to be something lacking in the negative concept. Are we already able to do and be what we are capable of doing and being? And, moreover, do we

know what we are able to do and be? Mill encourages individuals to conduct all sorts of life experiments in order to learn to know their nature and potential, which, at least on the surface, looks like a conflation of freedom from interference and striving to become oneself.¹¹³

According to Berlin, Mill's conception of negative freedom excludes concerns of independence, the search for status and recognition, fighting against degradation. "What I may seek to avoid is simply being ignored, or patronised, or despised, or being taken too much for granted – in short, not being treated as an individual" (Berlin, 1969: 155). Moreover, "the only persons who can so recognise me, and thereby give me the sense of being someone, are the members of the society to which (...) I feel that I belong" (Berlin, 1969: 156). This means that the attitude towards you of the others who belong to this community would have to change. Berlin goes on:

What they want, as often as not, is simply recognition (of their class or nation, or colour or race) as an independent source of human activity, as an entity with a will of its own, intending to act in accordance with it (...), and not to be ruled, educated, guided, with however light a hand, as being not quite fully human, and therefore not quite fully free. (Berlin, 1969: 156-157)

In the end, Berlin seems a bit reluctant to classify this demand as a third sense of liberty, although he points out that "the craving for status is, in certain respects, very close to the desire to be an independent agent" (Berlin, 1969: 159). Nevertheless, in this, he comes close to Skinner's (2002) third concept of liberty as independence, freedom from arbitrary power.

If the negative notion of liberty is not sufficient for our purposes, does that mean that we have to opt for the positive notion? Berlin (1969: 171) arrives at a notion of *pluralism*, which "with the measure of 'negative' liberty that it entails, seems (...) a truer and more humane ideal" than the often authoritarian positive conception, because it recognizes "the fact that human goals are many, not all of them commensurable, and in perpetual rivalry with one another" and does not deprive

¹¹³ Berlin (1969) furthermore claims that Mill is confusing two positions, namely the principle of non-interference with the fostering of human genius ("integrity, love of truth and fiery individualism") – the connection is at best empirical; many disciplined societies have fostered great minds and insights. So we should note at least this: there is a potential caveat in the link between intellectual freedom and political freedom – or it might also be wrongly specified by Mill.

people of “much that they have found to be indispensable to their life as unpredictably self-transforming humans”.

For Berlin, pluralism ensures the tolerance of diverse values; but in the academic realm, with its intrinsic purpose of truth-pursuit, this is not sufficient. On my reading, Berlin is distinguishing between two notions of the self: one in which the self is given, so the individual knows what it really wants to do and be; and one in which the self is striving to figure out its identity, and hence has to go through a process of becoming what it truly is. In the former case, freedom means being able to carry out your life in accordance with your given¹¹⁴ and known principles and wants; in the latter case, freedom means having realized oneself and being it. How do I know whether I already am what I can be? Are the orthodox economist’s wishes his true wishes? If there is absence of pluralism in economics education, economists cannot possibly have realized what they could potentially be – their choice of adhering to orthodoxy is not an informed choice but a matter of inculcation. Under the minimal assumption that scientists inherently pursue truth, they should subscribe to pluralism. If, however, the institutional conditions for discourse violate the rules of truth-pursuit, the methodological preferences of academics will be adapted to this suboptimal environment; the academic might be unaware that she is not realizing her full potential, and that the situation is ill-fit for the self-realization of others.¹¹⁵ The end (*telos*) of the academic/economist is to flourish as a truth-pursuing researcher. We therefore need to make sure that the scientific community is conducive to the flourishing of academics/economists.

Expounding on Habermas’ rules of discourse, Chambers (1995: 239) explains that “in addition to the negative requirement that individuals be given the space and opportunity to speak, productive discourses contain the positive requirement that individuals listen to one another, respond to one another, and justify their positions to one another”. In other words, the rules of discourse are not simply a negative principle of non-interference; they also entail particular duties. This brings us from liberty to Mill’s concept of justice, which is one of our governing notions. The liberty of discussion requires operative justice in the academy. These negative and positive

¹¹⁴ This does not necessarily mean that your preferences cannot change. You can decide to nurture this capacity and perhaps learn to enjoy a different form of activities and stimuli. The point is that the source of your desires is yourself; hence there is no inauthenticity involved in following them, which there could be on the positive notion of freedom.

¹¹⁵ The exploration of pluralism in relation to liberal education is explored in chapter 6.

requirements are specifically rights of academics taking part in scientific discourse: the right to utter one's view (formulate one's theory), to be listened to, and responded to using normal standards of criticism. If these rights are not guaranteed to scientific practitioners, then the relevant discourse or discipline is, in a sense which must be further illuminated, unjust. Scholars are unfree if they have not been given the opportunity to become what they can be (positively), and/or do not have the opportunity to pursue truth in the way they deem fit (negatively). In this way, justice in the academy is a prerequisite for liberty.

Behind the veil of ignorance, and beyond

Despite his insistence on individuality, liberty and diversity, Mill persisted in asserting that there was one principle of the Good to which all others were subordinate – namely the Greatest Happiness Principle, or Utility – and here the main thrust of contemporary political philosophy departs from him. The common understanding is that no such ultimate principle exists. In line with this, John Rawls seeks, not a foundation, but an uncontroversial starting point for his theory of justice.¹¹⁶

Central in this post-metaphysical moral philosophy is the demand for “impartiality”. How do we secure a neutral perspective on justice? Rawls’ (1999 [1971]) famous suggestion is the focal group, which determines a just distribution of resources behind a veil of ignorance (about where in society they will end up), which is meant to secure the impartiality of the results thus arrived at. The results are the maximin principle, i.e. that the position of the worst-off should be maximized, and that every citizen has a right to certain primary goods.¹¹⁷ Rawls’ theory has set the tone for contemporary moral philosophy, as his critics seek to build on his thought – by pointing out that his theory is not sufficiently impartial.

One main critic, Jürgen Habermas, claims that Rawls conflates two levels of inquiry, i.e. establishing the procedures for attaining justice, and establishing the actual principles of justice that these procedures might lead to.

¹¹⁶ “His focus is strictly how to work up normative ideas already operating in constitutional liberal democracies” (Pedersen, 2012: 402).

¹¹⁷ These encompass personal development, political liberties and material goods. Demands on space restrict me from going further into his theory presently.

Once a normative theory like Rawls's theory of justice strays into substantive issues, it becomes just one contribution to practical discourse among many, even though it may be an especially competent one. It no longer helps to ground the moral point of view that characterizes practical discourses *as such*. (Habermas, 1990 [1983]: 120).

Habermas uses the distinction procedural/substantive, and criticizes Rawls for being substantive, i.e. not procedural *enough*, thus losing generality.¹¹⁸ To rectify this, Habermas' own "[d]iscourse ethics does not set up substantive orientations. Instead, it establishes a *procedure* based on presuppositions and designed to guarantee the impartiality of the process of judging" (Habermas, 1990 [1983]: 122).

Yet someone also has to judge. If we accept Habermas' division between procedural and substantive, this does not preclude us from undertaking substantive work – from making a contribution. I have to be substantive in the sense that I comment upon the actual institutions, but not in the sense that I judge between different methodological approaches. I am indeed concerned with finding out to what extent the economics community satisfies the moral condition, as well as how it might become more just. Nevertheless, the procedural justification takes precedence in the abstract move, so we will first explore the procedural approach that Habermas suggests.

¹¹⁸ Martha Nussbaum (2006: 10), however, uses the distinction procedure/outcome-oriented, and criticizes Rawls for being *too* procedural. According to her, he has a conception of "pure procedural justice", in which the correct procedure defines the correct outcome. Nussbaum thus seems to equate "procedural" with "contract theory". She is promoting a more substantive approach, because "[i]f life actually contains a plurality of things that have a necessary relation to a life worthy of human dignity, it is precision, and not its opposite, to point that out" (Nussbaum, 2006: 84-85). Amartya Sen (2010) seems to side with Nussbaum when stating that Rawls' theory is an example of "closed impartiality", as opposed to the "open impartiality" he himself advocates. Rawls' veil of ignorance is an attempt to attain impartiality, but his procedure runs the danger of suffering from parochialism, from being too entrenched in local values. Sen (2010: 128) explains that although the veil of ignorance "is a very effective device for making people see beyond their personal vested interests and goals", he is concerned that "the absence of some procedural insistence on forceful examination of local values that may, on further scrutiny, turn out to be preconceptions and biases that are common in a focal group". By calling upon the "impartial spectator" in us, we are able to take the viewpoints of other people, from the outside, and in this manner we can attain "open impartiality" (Sen, 2010: 124-152). Sen (2010: 8-12) is, furthermore, critical of what he calls "transcendental institutionalism", which he thinks Rawls' theory is an example of. He draws a distinction between arrangement-focussed (*niti*) and realization-focussed (*nyaya*) approaches, which he himself advocates. Despite their differences, what these viewpoints have in common is that they criticize Rawls' theory for its limited applicability or validity, i.e. they share the criticism of Rawls' theory as being not fully *impartial*. Whereas Habermas ascribes this to the substantive aspects of his theory, for Nussbaum and Sen it is not substantive enough.

In modern societies we encounter a pluralism of individual life-styles and collective forms of life and a corresponding multiplicity of ideas of the good life. As a consequence we must give up one of two things: the claim of classical philosophy to be able to place competing ways of life in a hierarchy and establish at its acme one privileged way of life over against all others or the modern principle of tolerance according to which one view of life is as good as any other, or at least has equal right to exist and be recognized. (Habermas, 1995: 122-123)

The immediate attractiveness of Habermas' discourse ethics derives from its abstraction from the particular content of propositions, norms and values. This is in line with our aim to reach a justification for pluralism at the highest possible level of generality. To what extent does Habermas' discourse ethics help us establish and evaluate pluralist institutions; can he provide a benchmark for institutions facilitating argumentative practice in the academic world? Some context on his theory is required.

In his *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas analyses the relationship between "lifeworld" and "system", which correspond roughly to two forms of action, communicative action and strategic action, respectively. According to Habermas, communicative understanding is the inherent aim of our interactions with other people. In our social lives, communication aims at a "rationally motivated agreement" (Habermas, 1984 [1981]: 26). Communicative action, through the use of language, is the means by which such understanding is achieved. When we encounter an interlocutor we make "validity claims", of which there are three kinds: to truth, rightness, and truthfulness. When I make a validity claim – as a speaker – I make an implicit promise to justify it if challenged by the hearer. For example, when I make a factual proposition, I promise that I can justify it to you if you do not immediately accept it. Since we share background notions and codes of conduct with members of our culture and society (our lifeworld), communication and interaction is, for the most part, rather seamless, and this serves social integration and cohesion.

However, if you dispute my claim, we enter *discourse*, which is a form of meta-discussion of the causes of our disagreement, with an aim to re-establish consensus. "Whatever is claimed to be valid, right or true can necessarily gain the assent of participants in a properly prosecuted discourse" (Finlayson, 2005: 46). Validity claims are universal; their appeal is independent of the particular context in

which they arise. Discourse between the individual actor and the “generalized other”, through the use of communicative reason, has as its inherent aim the agreement on moral norms for action and matters of truth.

There are three different kinds of discourse, roughly corresponding to each of the three kinds of validity claims. Theoretical discourses deal with questions of truth, practical discourses deal with rightness, and aesthetic discourses deal with truthfulness (Finlayson, 2005). Scientific discourse is a specialized sub-form of theoretical discourse. Theoretical-scientific discourse aims at truth through communicative action of the participants.

Habermas’ discourse ethics is, however, mainly preoccupied with practical discourse and validity claims to rightness. This gives rise to a question of the applicability of discourse ethics to scientific discourse. According to Bohman and Rehg (2014), this is an undeveloped aspect of Habermas’ theory. They ask: “How does the cogency of scientific arguments depend on or involve various institutional structures and mechanisms, such as peer review, assignment of credit, distribution of grant money, and so on?” (Bohman and Rehg, 2014). These are important questions that I will consider. Habermas holds that there is an analogous structure between discourses on truth and rightness. Following Habermas, we can, therefore, start to discover the institutional requirements for approximating the ideals of theoretical discourse. Before I embark upon this path, however, I should briefly explain why such institutional requirements might *not* be attained.

The validity claims and discourse pertain to communicative action, which is the primary mode of action in the social realm. However, there is a second type of action, i.e. “strategic action” (Habermas, 1984 [1981]: 86-87), to which we might resort in situations in which we do not reach communicative understanding, or in situations in which the preconditions for reaching such understanding is undermined. In performing strategic action (Habermas, 1990 [1983]: 133-134), the actor, rather than seeking mutual understanding, seeks to achieve some end for himself – and relies on “instrumental” rather than “communicative” rationality. In strategic action, the actor can use some other person as a means to achieve their end.

Communicative action is characteristic of the lifeworld, the immediate, shared background – culture, language and community – that provides life with meaning. In the modern world, we have seen the rise of the system – the economy and state administration – which serve to integrate complex modern societies. The system is,

however, governed by instrumental reason and the steering media, money and power, which act as efficient symbolic vehicles for coordination that replace the use of communicative action orientated towards consensus. It is possible for communicative action to break down and for the lifeworld to become dominated by the strategic action and instrumental reason that characterize the system. It is a topic of the final chapter to contextualize whether the internal developments in the discipline of economics can be seen as a result of the system encroaching upon, or “colonizing”, the lifeworld. My current purpose, however, is to understand the nature of institutions that facilitate the proper working of truth-orientated discourse.

Establishing the standards

Habermas’ discourse ethics is affiliated with Kant’s deontological ethics, but whereas Kant’s individual is isolated and his conception of reason transcendental, Habermas’ individual is largely social and orientated towards the social realm in its purposeful actions and quests for meaning. Although they both seek universal norms for action, for Habermas these norms are intersubjectively, rather than metaphysically, justified. In striving for a universal moral philosophy, however, Habermas needs a common denominator that transcends local cultures and values.

Habermas (1990 [1983]) builds his moral theory on Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development: we move from a preconventional morality in which we are primarily motivated by self-interest, through a conventional stage in which we act according to socially accepted norms, and wind up at the postconventional stage, at which we are able to abstract from culturally bound ethics and move into a stage of universal morality, where action norms can be questioned and should be justified. Analogously, as pluralists we must abstract from the methodological views of our particular schools of thought in justifying methodological norms in the discipline. I think this is a demanding moral requirement, especially if theoretical practitioners have not been stimulated to achieve the required development.¹¹⁹

When we justify norms, we implicitly invoke the universalization principle upon which Habermas founds his discourse ethics:

¹¹⁹ Shweder (1986) claims that only 5 per cent of the world’s population can be said to have a postconventional morality; most people are conventionally moral, and Shweder sees no fault in that. This is, I think, a matter that touches upon the clash between procedurality and substantivity – to what extent do our personal circumstances and relations determine our morality and the nature of our morally motivated actions?

(U) For a norm to be valid, the consequences and side effects that its general observance can be expected to have for the satisfaction of the particular interests of each person affected must be such that all affected can accept them freely. (Habermas, 1990 [1983]: 120)

When discourse arises because an underlying norm is called into question, the principle of universalization tacitly guides the process; consensus is reached when all affected can accept the consequences of the norm.¹²⁰

Now, even if the primary realm of application of Habermas' discourse ethics is the practical realm of moral philosophy, we can see an immediate affinity between his universalization principle and our abstract move. On (U), Habermas (1997: 107) explains: "[T]his principle certainly has a normative content inasmuch as it explicates the meaning of impartiality in practical judgments. However, despite its normative content, it lies at a level of abstraction that is *still neutral*". We see, then, that the principle of universalization seeks to achieve the abstraction, neutrality and impartiality that we have been calling for in the justification of pluralism. Habermas elaborates:

(U) works like a rule that eliminates as nongeneralizable content all those concrete value orientations with which particular biographies or forms of life are permeated (...) With its justification of (U), discourse ethics sets itself in opposition to the fundamental assumptions of material ethics. The latter is oriented to issues of happiness and tends to ontologically favor some particular type of ethical life or other. By defining the sphere of the normative validity of action norms, discourse ethics sets the domain of moral validity off from the domain of cultural value contents. (Habermas, 1990 [1983]: 120)

Similarly, the justification of pluralism must be set off from the domain of methodological value contents. The "material ethics", which "tends to ontologically favor some particular type of ethical life", is analogous to the ontological view, which tends – naturally – to ontologically favour some particular type of theorizing.

¹²⁰ Finlayson (2005: 81) explains: "(U) is not itself a moral norm. It is a second-order principle, which tests the validity of first-order moral norms by checking whether or not they are universalizable."

Hence, Habermas seems to lend us a purely procedural approach to the justification of pluralism. Pluralism as a norm is impartial and takes into account the consequences for everyone affected by it. Pluralism cannot *a priori* exclude any schools of thought or methodological approach. This universalization criterion, a first principle of this thesis, cannot be further grounded *morally* (although it also has *epistemological* grounds, as we have seen earlier). However, there are some problems with this procedural move – and the discourse ethics in general – for our analysis of the economics discipline and potential reform proposals.

Firstly, the approach is abstract in the sense that it only shows us the requirements for valid norms. It does not provide guidelines for establishing norms, i.e. we cannot use Habermas' theory to outline a proposal for reform of the institutional structure of the economics academy. How many norms are, indeed, universally accepted? This is not Habermas' purpose. The point is to emphasize that our moral orientation implicitly evokes (U); it reflects a fundamental feature of our morality. Nevertheless, it raises the question of how, if at all, we can provide tangible proposals for pluralistic reform of the discipline.

Secondly, the universality of communicative rationality and norms creates a potential tension in this thesis. The individual is largely social, yet this sociality is universal; it transcends local communities: "With the notion of an ideally extended communication community as its point of reference, moral theory also leaves behind all presocial concepts of the person. Individuation is merely the reverse side of socialization" (Habermas, 1995: 130). However, universal rationality implies that subjects, even if their identity and understanding of the world are shaped in the given lifeworld, are not ultimately bound by their local horizons (culture, methodological framework, etc.). If we follow Habermas, it might be that the Mill-Feyerabend principle of actively encouraging opposing ideas by drawing on *incommensurable* traditions, is redundant – as a validity claim always makes a universal appeal to standards of rationality that transcend the specific community in which it arises.

In other words, *prima facie*, Habermas' discourse ethics helps us by so clearly abstracting from particular content – while at the same time threatening to leave us forever in abstraction. Furthermore, it seems to pose a challenge to our embracement of the post-positivistic condition, the sea change in the philosophy of science with its emphasis on the tradition bound nature of scientific reason. I will seek to overcome these challenges in what follows.

The rules of discourse

Discourse, in Habermas' sense of the term, arises when there is disagreement, e.g. on an underlying action norm. An analogous disagreement in scientific discourse would be on fundamental methodological values. Heterodox economists have continuously raised claims that orthodox economics is methodologically flawed or deficient. In the wake of the financial crisis, which the dominant approach was largely unable to predict and explain (Bezemer, 2010; Eliassen, 2016), such claims have been intensified. Why does this not lead to a more comprehensive discourse on methodological tools in economics? The situation in economics seems to be that whenever an orthodox theory, model or argument is disputed from a heterodox viewpoint, it seems that the orthodox economist does not perceive this criticism as precipitating a reply; there is no need to engage with this criticism or reach a consensus with those who deploy a different methodological viewpoint. Is this because heterodox economists are not seen as members of the community?

A key difference between relativism and pluralism is that pluralism invokes standards; it is not a position of *anything goes*. Yet it is not clear exactly what these standards are or how they are brought about. The failure to identify the true nature of these standards is a shortcoming in the pluralism in economics literature. Fearing relativism, alleged pluralists raise demands for methodological standards that in practice imply a guiding of the exchange – an unwarranted circumscription of the scientific playing field.

We must strive to make the standards procedural, i.e. detached from theoretical or methodological content (in the sense of drawing on particular approaches as part of the justification). Yet they cannot be so procedural that they are devoid of substance – or substantial potential. The crucial status of the rules of discourse draws from the fact that they are always already presupposed in any discourse.¹²¹ Habermas' *transcendental pragmatics* can establish these, and only these, rules. One cannot infer norms directly from the rules of discourse. Moral theory, i.e. discourse ethics, deals only with the procedure. Substantive principles must be justified in practical discourses.

¹²¹ Even a debate on the prevalence of these rules in discourse will have to follow these rules of “argumentation as such”.

Participants in argumentation cannot avoid the presupposition that, owing to certain characteristics that require formal description, the structure of their communication rules out all external or internal coercion other than the force of the better argument and thereby also neutralizes all motives other than that of the cooperative search for truth. (Habermas, 1990 [1983]: 89)

The rules of discourse are therefore not conventions, but inescapable presuppositions of argumentation. Yet they describe an ideal situation; real world discourse and argumentation would always have to seek approximations due to practical limitations and the diversity of human motives:

[P]articipants are (...) real human beings driven by other motives in addition to the one permitted motive of the search for truth (...). [I]nstitutional measures are needed to sufficiently neutralize empirical limitations and avoidable internal and external interference so that the idealized conditions always already presupposed by participants in argumentation can at least be adequately approximated. (Habermas, 1990 [1983]: 90)

Habermas coins the term “ideal speech situation”, which draws up the conditions for the proper working of communicative rationality:

[W]e call a speech situation ideal if communication is impeded neither by external contingent forces nor, more importantly, by constraints arising from the structure of communication itself. The ideal speech situation excludes systematic distortion of communication. Only then is the sole prevailing force the characteristic unforced force of the better argument. (Habermas, 2001: 97)

The ideal speech situation involves a condition of symmetry in the opportunities to freely conduct speech acts, and requires that actors can be held accountable and are ready and willing to give intelligible reasons for their actions with a view to communicatively resolving disagreements.¹²² However, even if interlocutors always presuppose an ideal speech situation, this does not safeguard nonhegemonic

¹²² Dobusch and Kapeller (2012a: 1046) invoke the ideal speech situation as the “archetypal social setting” of a “pluralist paradigm”.

discussion; it does not prevent a situation in which the discussants falsely believe they are not coerced.

Systematic distortion of communication can occur. In communication we are typically placed in a “gray area” (Habermas, 2001: 137) in which we try to bring about agreement when there is lack of understanding, misunderstanding or involuntary insincerity. The internal organization of speech that presupposes the ideal situation is situated in an external organization of speech that institutionally regulates the context for resolving disagreement by determining who may participate, when the discussion starts and stops and the relevant scope of contributions (Habermas, 2001). Systematic distortion occurs when problems of external organization of speech are shifted onto the internal organization, which “gives rise to pathological mutations of the patterns of communication” (Habermas, 2001: 147). However, there is an important distinction between recourse to strategic action, which can be openly admitted, and systematically distorted communication, which operates under the pretence that it is not distorted. “Thus we are dealing with conflicts that can be neither openly carried out nor resolved consensually, but that smolder on with the effect of distorting communication” (Habermas, 2001: 155). Moreover, the external organization might exclude contributions on a legitimate basis. For example:

A scientist fails to express herself sufficiently clearly. She abides neither by the demands for explication nor by the terminology of a discourse, which is regulated by an academic discipline. Her colleagues complain that she is unintelligible. This does not mean that her factual assertions are not intelligible, but only that they violate the norms of intelligibility to be expected in the context of a specialized public sphere. In this case, communication is *not* distorted. (Habermas, 2001: 150, my emphasis)

Thus there are three ways in which we can interpret an exclusion of heterodox contributions (if this is in fact taking place) in the external organization of communicative interaction in the discipline of economics: i) the exclusion is legitimate as the communicative consensus in the field has established well-grounded institutional regulations on the scope of relevant contributions; ii) the exclusion is a result of a strategic oppression of heterodox economics in order for orthodox economics to retain its discursive power; or iii) the exclusion is a result of systematically distorted communication in which a pseudo-consensus is upheld,

which (unconsciously) represses the nature of the disagreement. An additional feature of the third case is that the need for repression is caused by a conflict of identity. In our context, this could imply that orthodox economists are repressing the need for methodological or discursive change as this challenges their professional identity insofar as this is linked to orthodox theory.

Temporarily suspending judgment on which of the three cases that are relevant, the crucial questions for us are whether or not, and why or why not the idealized conditions are adequately approximated in economics. However, it is important to “carefully differentiate between rules of discourse and conventions serving the institutionalization of discourses, conventions that help to actualize the ideal content of the presuppositions of argumentation under empirical conditions” (Habermas, 1990 [1983]: 92). I have previously indicated the need to draw up such substantive conventions. We do not have to withdraw this in the light of Habermas’ reservations against substantive theorizing as being mere “contributions”, but we should be aware of this potential limitation in seeking to describe the ideal institutions. Fultner (2001: xv) states: “It is crucial to remember that discourses *as a matter of fact* usually do not manifest the conditions of the ideal speech situation, but the model can serve as a standard in identifying deviations from the ideal of rational consensus.” That is precisely our aim.

The rules of discourse are divided into three levels: the level of products, procedure and process.¹²³ The lowest level, of products, deals with the logical-semantic content of arguments, which has no bearing on the ethical issues involved.¹²⁴ Next, the procedural level deals with questions of accountability and truthfulness, and has some implications for how scientific argument is carried out.¹²⁵ However, the rules of discourse for the level of *process*, are, ethically speaking, the most important:

¹²³ Habermas (1990 [1983]: 87-89) presents the rules of argumentation for each level, and takes his lead from R. Alexy’s rulebook.

¹²⁴ “1.1. No speaker may contradict himself. 1.2. Every speaker who applies predicate *F* to object *A* must be prepared to apply *F* to all other objects resembling *A* in all relevant aspects. 1.3. Different speakers may not use the same expression with different meanings” (Habermas, 1990 [1983]: 87). These basic logical points are ubiquitous; even a cultural relativist position admits that these are always presupposed (Shweder, 1986). Longino (2002: 162) similarly states that countersensory or counterlogical rules are not licensed; they will meet resistance as embodied subjects apply scientific knowledge in the communities.

¹²⁵ It presupposes relations of mutual recognition (Habermas, 1990 [1983]: 88), which is of import to the heterodox/orthodox relation. Habermas lists two examples of rules at the procedural level, namely: “2.1. Every speaker may assert only what he really believes. 2.2. A person who disputes a proposition or norm not under discussion must provide a reason for

- 3.1 Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in the discourse.
 - 3.2 a) Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatsoever.
b) Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatsoever into the discourse.
c) Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires and needs.
 - 3.3 No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in (3.1) and (3.2).
- (Habermas, 1990 [1983]: 89)

We see that rule 3.1 requires competence on the issue to be allowed to take part in the discourse. This might be a crucial factor for scientific discourse, as a dominant group might define competence. Does one, for example, have to be an expert in DSGE modelling in order to have a voice in macroeconomics? And how can we judge who is to judge this competency? Can neoclassical economists change the boundaries of the discipline such as to render heterodox economists incompetent? I will return to this *infra*.

Whereas 3.2 guarantees that anything can in principle be subjected to discourse, rule 3.3 ensures that no force is used in the regulation of discourse. Habermas specifies that this rule provides the right to equal participation “without the possibility of repression, be it ever so subtle or covert” (Habermas, 1990 [1983]: 89), which is a requirement that should be assessed. Furthermore, the meaning of coercion should be contextualized.

Park and Kayatekin (2000: 576), interpreting Habermas, state: “Everybody needs to be given a right to make claims *as well as* the right to criticise others. Furthermore, everyone here refers to all *possible* participants of communicative action.” The reference to *rights* here invokes justice, as we recall from Mill’s definition of justice. Moreover, “although we *presuppose* an ideal speech situation for speech acts, for speech acts to constitute truth there have to be specific conditions—the conditions of symmetry and reciprocity” (Park and Kayatekin, 2000: 577).

wanting to do so” (Habermas, 1990 [1983]: 88). At face value, rule 2.1 might seem contradictory to Feyerabend’s encouragement that scientists should invent new theories for the sake of it, and in this way not be true to their own beliefs. As long as it is clear that this is a well-grounded methodological practice (the scientist is truthful in that sense), this should not be a problem. And, indeed, Habermas generally seems to embrace the notion that *ideas* are competing, whereas *humans* are co-operative.

Although the rules are presupposed by participants in discourse, certain conditions must be in place in order to safeguard the outcomes. However, Habermas (1997: 322-323) emphasizes in a later book that we should not confuse the presuppositions of argument with its empirical conditions. His point is that when we make an argument, we always address an ideal community/generalized other. Rehg (2009: 135-136) therefore interprets Habermas as saying that this is not an empirical matter at all, and the rules are simply presupposed ideals that cannot be verified in practice.

Bohman and Rehg (2014) point out that Habermas' theory is not well developed for scientific discourses. Furthermore, the authors claim that his theory in this case probably would overlook the specifically value-laden dimension of scientific work, like we claimed above, which renders such discourse a realm for specialists.¹²⁶ Rehg (2009: 154) writes that the social-institutional dimensions can function normatively only when they sufficiently approximate dialogical conditions. Scientific argument is a social practice. He wants to design institutions for academic argumentation, and sets up an "idealizing presupposition", which has to be met by a "real warrant", as a restatement of Habermas' theory:

Scientists may reasonably judge their arguments to be logically cogent only if they presuppose those arguments would be generally accepted in dialogically adequate processes of argumentation concerned with the logical merits of the arguments at issue. (...) This idealizing presupposition must be warranted by observable features of the actual social organization, conduct of scientific inquiry and discourse, and level of consensus. (Rehg, 2009: 155)

Yet, as noted, the intention of Habermas' standards is to transcend specific contexts of argumentation, and not to be applied in practice for institutional design, and thereby "the question arises of how one knows whether a given design provides the warrant

¹²⁶ Eriksen and Weigård (2003) nevertheless attempt to provide some guidelines for institutional design for democratic communities based on Habermas' discourse theory. Eriksen and Weigård (2003: 207) state that from the rules 3.1 – 3.3 "follows the moral norm that actors should be given the opportunity to express their opinion in a free and equal manner", before outlining the following institutional requirements for this a) equal access to discussions; b) no limitations on the discussion; c) equal opportunities to oppose an assertion, and; d) equal opportunities to put forward arguments.

described above” (Rehg, 2009: 157). Rehg further states that, as scientific argument proceeds, we do not have the means to empirically assess whether the requirement of communicative rationality have been met. This, then, has to be checked against his real warrant – “it holds up so long as critical scrutiny of the organization and conduct of discourse does not uncover any *obvious* dialogical flaws” (Rehg, 2009: 155, my emphasis).

There are thus some internal standards, and some external assessment standards. Such scrutiny of the organization and conduct of discourse is what we will undertake in the next chapter. How can such a critical scrutiny be undertaken?¹²⁷ This is a key challenge: how can we possibly determine that orthodox economics falls short in a way that makes sense to orthodox economics? From a heterodox perspective, it is no big task to point out that the dialogical institutions of orthodox economics are insufficient. The trouble is that such statements invoke premises that the orthodox economist cannot accept, or perhaps not even comprehend, however obvious the shortcomings of the discipline are to the heterodox economist, or even the disinterested bystander.

Reason: reasonable or social?

I noted above that there is a potential clash between Habermas’ universal aspirations and the tradition-entrenched reason of post-positivism. A short interjection on the link between reason and tradition is therefore in place, even if it does not do full justice to the problem.

Habermas’ approach is in a specific sense thoroughly rationalistic in building on the presupposition of reasoned argument. He is grounding his discourse ethics – borrowing a term from Karl Otto-Apel – in “argumentation as such” (Habermas, 1990 [1983]: 81). The fact that we share reason is, according to Habermas, what safeguards the possibility of discourse and the possibility of a rationally motivated agreement (even if this takes the form of agreeing to disagree). In other words, reason has a tendency to agree with reason. The view on reason is linked to the view on individuality. The Habermasian subject tends to conform to the moral norm; if there are disruptions between us, we seek to interpret this in light of the underlying norm with an aim of reconciliation. If individuals did not have this tendency to conform, the

¹²⁷ The word “obvious” in the quote gives us a clue. Institutional malpractice is like the elephant – hard to define, but you recognize it when you see it.

very basis of communication, understanding and social life itself would seem to be threatened.

For Habermas, then, communicative reason transcends local communities or local traditions. For Feyerabend it does not; different wholesale scientific traditions are incommensurable, and any attempt at abstracting from them in the name of “rationalism” is illusory.¹²⁸ We are thus posed with a dilemma. If individuality – breaking the norm – is necessary for progress, then Habermas’ scheme might have a conservative bias;¹²⁹ yet for him there is resort to neutral ground in our common morality and rationality. On the other hand, recourse to tradition-independent reason of some sort is required in order to establish a neutral basis for pluralism, and herein lies the shortcoming of Feyerabendian practice-entrenched reason. Feyerabend cannot – at least logically, without further assistance – satisfy a tradition-independent justification of pluralism. That is, his encouragement of methodological alternatives is universal and independent of traditions – but he does not sufficiently help us in establishing tradition-neutral standards of practice.

Habermas seeks to overcome frame-relativity by appealing to neutral reason in order to achieve mutual understanding across the pluralism of values. Compare this with Feyerabend (2010: 236): “Protagorean relativism is *reasonable* because it pays attention to the pluralism of traditions and values.” In a certain sense, then, their aims turn out to be similar; they are both appealing to a discursive context free from the abuse of power; they both want to accommodate pluralism. Is there any hope of consolidating them?¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Yet the boundaries of a tradition might be hard to determine (Feyerabend, 1989: 403-404).

¹²⁹ Notwithstanding that “norm” has a strong meaning for Habermas, he depicts individuals as essentially orientated towards the norm – both in the sense of universal moral principles and in the sense of convention. For him individuation and socialization are two sides of the same coin. Feyerabend and Mill have a different take on norms (in the sense of conventions). They encourage individuals to challenge the norm to the extent that they are able to. Mill (1998 [1859]) wants us to develop our individuality, spontaneity and eccentricity – if we have it in us; we should nurture difference, not conforming. In this sense, for Mill, it is a virtue to deviate from normality. This is, moreover, precisely what Feyerabend encourages in his methodological application and radicalization of Mill’s treatise. The norm, the established methodological consensus, must be broken in order for science to progress. However, Habermas’ notion of normality is not based on the statistically normal features of communication, but rather invokes “the normative content inherent in the notion of linguistic communication itself” (Habermas, 2001: 136). Thus he does not validate the status quo in an uncritical sense.

¹³⁰ One way to smooth over the problems would be to follow McCloskey’s (1998 [1983]; 1985; 1994) rhetorical move, which in fact draws on both Feyerabend and Habermas. McCloskey builds on the post-positivistic insight that our linguistic terms have no reference

Neither rationality nor objectivity need suffer from this. Conceptual history reveals that our concepts of rationality and objectivity are more fluid than we often seem to think (Erickson et al., 2013; Daston, 1992). The prevalent notion of objectivity today is “aperspectival objectivity”, i.e. to be unbiased from individual and (to some extent) group idiosyncrasies (Daston, 1992). This notion seems to be guiding Habermas’ quest for impartiality as well as the abstract move. Yet in retaining such a notion, we run the danger of neglecting that traditions and individuals bring positive epistemic content to discourse, i.e. that a diversity of perspectives as such is seen as epistemically fruitful.¹³¹ This danger is relieved, but perhaps not removed, by emphasizing that we do not seek to judge between traditions in economics, but only to depict the environment in which the interplay between traditions will properly resolve such evaluations.

Helen Longino¹³² (2002) might provide a route out of the stalemate. She expounds a conflict in methodological debates between the rationality and the sociality of science. Philosophers have traditionally emphasized the rationality of scientific knowledge, she claims, i.e. scientific knowledge is always justified with

in objective reality, combined with an appeal to the ethics of domination free conversation, for which she uses the term *Sprachethik*. This is in the same spirit as my current effort. Park and Kayatekin (2000), however, point out the inner tension in McCloskey’s attempt at reconciling these two strands of thought. The Habermasian meta-rules on conversational morality are transcendental, as opposed to the community specific standards that arise locally, and McCloskey is glossing over the different notions of rationality this involves (Park and Kayatekin, 2000) – the very tension I am presently trying to overcome. The relevance of the matter is clear: “Can it be assumed, then, that arguments within the discipline are made in an atmosphere where decisions concerning publications, hiring, promotion and firing are taken where individual members of the community feel on an equal footing with every other member on making, disseminating and challenging ideas, or teaching heterodox economics? We contend here, in contrast with McCloskey, that given Habermas’s definition, the economics community in fact is not in an ideal speech situation, or anything approaching it” (Park and Kayatekin, 2000: 577). As mentioned, McCloskey underestimates the institutional obstacles to pluralism, and, in Park and Kayatekin’s analysis, she confuses the *de facto* validity of an approach (*Geltung*) with its *de jure* validity (*Gültigkeit*).

¹³¹ To the extent that aperspectival objectivity requires a removal of the elements of scientific observation that individuals bring into research, there is a loss involved in cultivating this notion (Daston, 1992). Moreover, it should be clear that a notion of aperspectival objectivity, is prevalent in academia today, as reflected in the following quotation from Theodore Porter: “A decision made by the numbers (or by explicit rules of some other sort) has at least the appearance of being fair and impersonal. Scientific objectivity thus provides an answer to a moral demand for impartiality and fairness. Quantification is a way of making decisions without seeming to decide” (cited in Wilsdon et al., 2015: 79). Wielded in this way, the notion can be seen to run counter to the purposes of pluralism when we start challenging to what extent such quantitative measures reflect quality, as I will do in the next chapter.

¹³² I am indebted to Jack Wright for pointing to the significance of Longino’s work in this context.

reference to established epistemological criteria.¹³³ On the other hand, sociologists of science have since Kuhn (1996 [1970]) insisted upon the social character of scientific knowledge, thereby seemingly removing the scientist's adherence to objective truth and rational scientific procedure. Longino, however, seeks to overcome the dichotomy between the "rational" and the "social". Rationality is, according to her, social. The rationality of science, cognition, rests upon the social nature of science – for better, not for worse. In this picture, ideas that are ratified through critical interaction achieve the status of objective knowledge.

What distinguishes Longino's position from others that emphasize the social nature of science is that she defines the social, not simply as something *shared*, but as *interaction*. This, in turn, safeguards the role of the individual researcher as a creative and important subject. The community is determined by its common public standards for evaluation, not by substantive elements (theories, models) that the practitioners share (as they would be for Kuhn, for example). Scientists are playing on the same field and agree on the rules; yet the rules are open to change through discursive interaction.¹³⁴

Longino keeps the rationality term, redefined as socially embedded. Moreover, she does not eschew judgment of a discipline's knowledge-producing practice from the outside. In fact, she seeks to establish institutional guidelines without guiding the substance of scientific exchange. Importantly, her fusion of the social and the rational maintains truth in the following sense: "Truth is not opposed to

¹³³ In other words, that there is an important distinction between the "context of justification" and the "context of discovery".

¹³⁴ The usual rational-social dichotomy is sustained by three binaries, namely individualism/nonindividualism, monism/nonmonism and nonrelativism/relativism (Longino, 2002: 89). The former refers to the subject of knowledge – is the epistemic subject universal (subject to universal criteria of knowledge), or is it rather socially situated? Monism/nonmonism regards ontological views of the world, whereas nonrelativism/relativism has to do with acceptability of knowledge and arguments. According to Longino, these three different levels of positions have often been conflated, so as to create two main positions of "Rationalizers", who embrace the positions on the left of the pairings, and "Sociologizers" who embrace the positions on the right. For example, a nonmonist position is automatically associated with relativism. This is typical of the pluralism debate in economics, as we have seen; a refusal to commit to realism in some form is met with charges of unbridled *anything goes* relativism. However, when we come to understand that knowledge comes in different forms (as knowledge production, as content, and as knowing, respectively), we can become "Nondichotomizers" and embrace nonindividualism, nonmonism and nonrelativism at the same time (Longino, 2002).

social values, it *is* a social value, but its regulatory function is directed/mediated by other social values operative in the research context” (Longino, 2002: 135).

Feyerabend speaks of “traditions” too broadly, whereas Habermas’ theory has not been specified for the purposes at hand. However, Habermas’ abstract grounding of discourse is highly valuable. It needs supplement in light of our view of the social aspects of science, for which his theory is not adequately developed. Thus modified, Habermas’ approach can be used for the assessment of institutions supporting knowledge-producing activities.

Norms for critical scientific discourse

Longino (2002) argues that appeals to transcendent norms must ultimately be appeals to change the local norms, and these changes are ratified by means of discursive interaction. She denies that “there is some context-free or transcendent set of norms that pre-empt or trumps the norms of a group”. Rather, “[t]hose norms themselves develop in the course of a community’s engaging in the practices of assertion, challenge, and response, and are a second-level product of such practices” (Longino, 2002: 105).

Can Longino help us bridge the gap between the ideal and the actual? Justification must be seen in the context of the sociality of science, on her account. What counts as scientific knowledge is determined in discourse. Hence, a normative epistemology must prescribe guidelines for this social scientific discourse:

Critical discursive interactions are social processes of knowledge production. They determine what gets to remain in the public pool of information that counts as knowledge. Thus, a normative account of knowledge must rest on norms governing such interactions. (Longino, 2002: 129)

The subjective becomes objective when ratified in the processes of criticism in the community, by surviving criticism from many points of view. In this way, Longino maintains a role for the creativity of the individual scientist – given the intrinsic social nature of scientific knowledge. The sociality lies in the interaction, rather than in knowledge being socially constructed *collectively*.

In response to sociality of science as maintained by sociologists, and with the aim of preserving the rationality of science faced with this critique, Longino (2002:

129-132) lists four “social norms for social knowledge”, or conditions that are required for the scientific discourse to be *effective* and for criticism to be *transformative*: Venues, Uptake, Public Standards and Tempered Equality. The criteria form an idealized image of scientific practice, given its social nature, and it is a matter of degree whether any community achieves this ideal.¹³⁵ However, a community that does not show commitment to the criteria may be epistemically faulty.

Yet at this point Longino faces a conundrum. How can she devise a list of such idealizations, which aspire to general validity for scientific practice, call them norms – and at the same time claim that all norms are ultimately local? This seems to be inconsistent, if not self-contradictory, and an extension of the rationality problem alluded to above. Can the claims be reconciled?

Longino (2002: 173-174) spots the contradiction in question and asks: “Whose conditions are these, and what is the ground of their normative claim?” She specifies that they are “grounds for criticisms of claims to knowledge, grounds derived from a shared sense of what knowledge is” – and these must, presumably, apply universally to knowledge-producing practices. Her solution is based on a distinction between general and local epistemology:

Those who reject the conditions have a different concept of knowledge, or perhaps, a concept of something else. So there is a sense in which even the general conditions are local, *just less local* than particular norms adopted in particular communities in conformity with the general conditions. (Longino, 2002: 174, my emphasis)

Her argument is still not fully convincing. Her insistence that norms are local, and that there are several degrees of local, seems to cloud the matter, even if she thereby only means that they are restricted to what we regard as knowledge-producing practices. I submit that her use of the term “norms” for both the local and the general level, by which she, in practice, annihilates the general level, may be inappropriate. A

¹³⁵ Kelly (2013) similarly discusses ideals of public discussion in a framework that allows for degrees of realization, by drawing on Sen’s (2009) *Idea of Justice* and seeking to go beyond his individualist approach by denoting public reason as a “collective capability”. Her resulting ideal of public discussion is strikingly similar to Habermas’ ideal speech situation yet shows some promise with regard to substantive evaluation.

more clear-cut method of distinguishing the two levels is required in order to ground the list of the four norms of critical discourse.

I propose a Habermasian rescue act: Norms are underlying principles that guide action, in this case scientific practice. At least some of these scientific norms are not local. In the local scientific communities, however, custom rules; different weight will be attached to different scientific values, etc. Confronted with other traditions – be it other schools of thought, other disciplines or outside observers – scientists might be met with objections to findings, methodology or institutional practice. This is, of course, fully legitimate and a normal feature given the openness of modern scientific discourses. The local tradition should be prepared to respond to such criticism in the public sphere, and, if necessary, modify its practice in accordance with the criticism as it spurs new development. The latter is, naturally, a matter that is ratified within the local tradition. Nevertheless, criticism invokes the underlying scientific norms; they supply the external standard of criticism that the local tradition might have failed to apply itself. If a tradition perennially fails to respond to such corrections, it is a sign that its scientific discourse is *obviously flawed* – that the scientific norms are violated, discourse is not arising to resolve it, which implies that the practitioners are preoccupied with something other than truth-pursuit (or, indeed, other than knowledge).

This is the very purpose of Longino's list. The four components – venue, uptake, standards and equality – are meant to be general and abstracted from particular traditions, even if *their interpretation* in the local traditions necessarily allows for variation. Longino (2002) admits this much in stating that the practices are always open to criticism. To be sure, some of the criteria are hard to evaluate without the substance inscribed in them locally, but it does not diminish their general validity. Yet they are, as Longino stated, idealizations.

Even if this rescue act works conceptually, it does not mean that it safeguards the applicability in practice. It is hard to draw the line between the social-scientific norms and the tradition-specific methodological values. This, however, is a matter to be informed by, and judged in, the next chapter. Moreover, the spectre of the demarcation criterion has not been fully exorcized. With these preliminary reservations and specifications in mind, let us move on to the “four norms for social knowledge” (Longino, 2002: 129-33).

1. *Venues*

There must be publicly recognized venues where criticism takes place, which should be the same as the venues where original research is presented, such as conferences and journals. Criticism should be regarded as equally important as the original research. In fact, Longino here draws on Mill's (1998 [1859]) point, explored above, that criticism makes us appreciate the grounds of our beliefs more fully. This is not a trivial requirement in the post-industrial world, Longino states, in the face of "limitations of space, the relation of scientific discourse to production and commerce whose consequence is privatization of information and ideas, and an understanding of research as the generation of positive results" (Longino, 2002: 129). She also makes a distinction between serious and pedestrian criticism, which is worthwhile noticing.

2. *Uptake*

Dissent must not only be tolerated; the community must respond to criticism from within, and change or modify beliefs, assumptions and arguments accordingly. "Uptake is what makes criticism part of a constructive and justificatory practice" (Longino, 2002: 130). Furthermore, the criticizing agents must take note of the responses to criticism.

3. *Public Standards*

There must be some standards of evaluation that all community members accept for the procedure of criticism; they must share some values and aims. Here, the issues start arising with regard to heterodox economics:

First, in order for criticism to be relevant to a position, it must appeal to something accepted by those who hold the position criticized. Similarly, alternative theories must be perceived to have some bearing on the concerns of a scientific community in order to obtain a hearing. (Longino, 2002: 130)

The public standards create a neutral (non-arbitrary) ground for criticism. Such shared standards are, moreover, important in order to agree on a resolution. However, crucially, values and standards "come to operate as such (...) by being let stand through multiple acts of microcognition and microcriticism" (Longino, 2002: 131). In

the following, we will have to ask: to what extent is this microcriticism in operation in economics?

If heterodox criticisms of orthodox economics are not regarded as relevant, and if the alternative heterodox theories are not seen as relevant alternatives, how can we tackle this situation? In fact, the three preceding points invoke the question of whether or not heterodox economists are members of the economics community at all. If they are not, what does this mean for the legitimacy of heterodox demands to become a more prominent part of the profession? The fourth and final point on Longino's list provides some clarity.

4. Tempered equality

The last criterion is the "equality of intellectual authority". Our different endowments and various resources call for qualifications of this into "tempered equality". Here comes the specification of the main requirement for our purposes, for pluralism:

A diversity of perspectives is necessary for vigorous and epistemically effective critical discourse. The social position or economic power of an individual or group in a community ought not determine who or what perspectives are taken seriously in that community. Where consensus exists, it must be the result not just of the exercise of political or economic power, or of the exclusion of dissenting perspectives, but a result of critical dialogue in which all relevant perspectives are represented. (...) The requirement of (tempered) equality of intellectual authority implies both that the persuasive effects of reasoning and argument be secured by unforced assent to the substantive and logical principles used in them, rather than by properties, such as social and economic power, of those who are propounding them; and that every member of the community be regarded as capable of contributing to its constructive and critical dialogue. (Longino, 2002: 131-132)

This does not imply that everyone, regardless of merits, should be granted attention. The public venue is meant to regulate this. Moreover, critics have to make sure that they update their criticism and do not repeat "the same old complaint" in order not to lose their community membership. Relevant subgroups need to be included, and communities must attend to criticism from outsiders. Longino (2002: 134) asks: "Do our educational practices exclude certain perspectives or discourage criticism?" This will be a key question for us in the remaining discussions.

Longino (2002: 131*n*) furthermore points out that the representation of different views is epistemologically *necessary*, whereas political or moral equality would only require an equal *chance* for all perspectives to be included. Thus this is a stronger condition than the one posed by Habermas (1990 [1983]), but it captures the tenet of Feyerabend's (2010) principle of proliferation. In fact, Longino states the essence of the Mill-Feyerabend principle, the encouragement of alternatives, that we have stated above:

[A] community must not only treat its acknowledged members as equally capable of providing persuasive and decisive reasons and must do more than be open to the expression of multiple points of view; it must also take active steps to ensure that alternative points of view are developed enough to be a source of criticism and new perspectives. Not only must potentially dissenting voices not be discounted; they must be cultivated. (Longino, 2002: 132)

Tempered equality clearly has resonance in Feyerabend's (1978: 9, original emphasis) writings: "*A free society is a society in which all traditions have equal rights and equal access to the centres of power*".

Longino points out that satisfaction of the four norms ensures that the accepted theories in the community are free from biases of individuals or subgroups. The question we need to raise is, then, whether there are any such subgroup (school of thought based) biases governing the direction of scientific inquiry in economics, and whether or not this is due to the profession failing to meet any or all of the four social norms for social knowledge. A community must be able to say that it is open to criticism, that it takes account of it and changes accordingly, and that it has included as many perspectives as possible (Longino, 2002: 174).

At the same time discourse has to be free of power, and at this point the tenet is the same for Habermas and Longino. In fact, with the modification we made above, we can say that these four norms place a universal moral demand on all scientists – even if they are a tad too substantive for Habermas' liking. The upside is that these norms have quite clear institutional implications, preparing the way for my next step in this thesis: to evaluate the institutional performance of the economics discipline.

Towards truth and justice

The starting point of this chapter was to, jointly, pursue the demand for justice in the calls for pluralism and establish standards for scientific institutions that can facilitate such academic justice, as well as the epistemological demand.

The discussion in the previous chapter led to a call for a radical pluralist methodology as the epistemological ideal in a world of irrevocable epistemic uncertainty. This is at one and the same time a demand on the individual scientist and an appeal to certain institutional requirements. It would be naïve to think that the acknowledgement of the epistemological merit of pluralism would be sufficient to bring about necessary change, so that the appropriate standards would emerge more or less by themselves. Pluralism must be institutionally supported.

On this background, I have tried to establish criteria that could, ideally, guide the implementation of pluralism, and at least evaluate a discipline's relative success in achieving the ideal implicit in the calls for pluralism. It seemed prerequisite that these criteria were independent of particular traditions; otherwise any judgment passed on the proper boundaries of a discipline would be based on (and biased towards) specific ontological or methodological views, which would entail, in Mill's words, "an assumption of infallibility". Pluralism should not be restricted: Feyerabend (2010) warns us against a guided, as opposed to an open, exchange; we risk suppressing important perspectives, and such exclusion may be unjust.

This insight was the basis for my "abstract move", which led me to the procedural level in order to provide an institutional benchmark for sound scientific discourse. Habermas' discourse ethics seemed a fruitful starting point for establishing the criteria for this ideal scientific discourse. Yet with Habermas' rules of discourse we are, firstly, lost in the abstractions without a tangible grasp on actual institutions, and, secondly, his conception of rationality poses a challenge to the post-positivistic insistence on the sociality of scientific knowledge even if proponents of such views clearly (and rightly) have intuitions that they do not sacrifice rationality.

Longino retains this sociality and manages to fuse it with rationality. Moreover, she ingeniously devises tradition-independent "norms" for scientific discourse, yet she somewhat undermines her own effort by at the same time stating that the norms are tradition-dependent. This can, however, be corrected by re-inviting Habermas' conception of norms and rules of discourse – Longino's four conditions are always already presupposed in knowledge-producing practices; if they are not

sufficiently fulfilled, scientific discourse proper is not taking place – the discourse is “obviously flawed” (Rehg, 2009).

Longino, therefore – albeit on Habermasian crutches – helps us maintain the abstract move, insofar as the criteria produced for evaluation of the discourse in economics are neutral with regard to schools of thought. Importantly, she also helps maintaining a radical pluralist epistemology over and above the mere toleration approach to which the value pluralism of Habermas and other contemporary moral philosophers would give rise. However, the strong tradition-dependence of reason that we have inherited from Feyerabend, does leave a problem with the neutral *evaluation* of the institutional arrangements, since so many of the scientific values and criteria are ultimately determined in local practice. We will leave it for the discussion in the next chapter to determine to what extent this can be judged.

We need, then, to assess whether there are any *obvious* dialogical flaws. The only way to do so is by looking at the actual scientific practice in economics. This might, in turn, resolve some of the theoretical problems in establishing criteria for judging such flaws.

Chapter 5. Pluralism – standard procedure?

For unto everyone that hath, shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.¹³⁶

Most scientists today are devoid of ideas, full of fear, intent on producing some paltry result so that they can add to the flood of inane papers that now constitutes ‘scientific progress’ in many areas. And, besides, what is more important? To lead a life which one has chosen with open eyes, or to spend one’s time in the nervous attempt of avoiding what some not so intelligent people call ‘dead ends’? (Feyerabend, 1981a: 165)

I recall reading in the Norwegian newspaper *Klassekampen* a decade ago – before I started studying economics – about a radical economist, who had had his application for promotion to professorship rejected by the national committee, on the grounds that his work did not “represent any significant contributions to the core of economic science as it is defined at the present” (HEN, 2007).¹³⁷ The economist in question, however, was, and still is, one of the most proficient economists in Norway and a prolific author of popular, as well as unpopular, economics books and articles. He might also be, ironically, the foremost expert on neoclassical economics in the country. In this light, it was very surprising that his so-called peers deemed him inferior.

I was reminded of this case when Lee (2008) referred to it in his case for a heterodox journal ranking. Lee points out that the committee had based their evaluation of the Norwegian’s scientific production on only one ranking of journals that was ordered by the European Economic Association and appeared in Kalaitzidakis, Stengos and Mamuneas (2003) (the purpose of which was not to serve as a single indicator in the manner it had been used by the committee). At any rate, the economist in question had only two co-authored papers published in the *Cambridge Journal of Economics* (one of 159 journals on that list), which is not sufficient when, as the committee’s statement reads, “[p]ublication in good journals with a reasonably high impact factor forms a crucial criterion in assessing

¹³⁶ From the Gospel according to St. Matthew, as cited in Merton (1968: 58).

¹³⁷ The relevant documents are reported in HEN (2007).

competency for professorship” (HEN, 2007). In his appeal against the decision, which was rejected, he therefore concludes:

One consequence of the mechanical use of the list [devised] by Kalaitzidakis et al., will be that no heterodox economist, irrespective of qualifications, can become a professor of economics in Norway. Such a selection practice is bound to lead to less scientific pluralism and less competition between contesting paradigms and schools within economics. (HEN, 2007)

In this case, on the face of it, it seems that the criteria used to evaluate professorial competency were quite narrow and also biased in a tendency to equate mainstream economics with *quality*. It is puzzling that it could be so obvious to some that this economist is truly eminent, whereas the committee judges him as mediocre. This kind of procedure, if followed as strictly as the above might indicate, is highly conservative of the status quo. And if he is right in his own evaluation of the procedure, the consequence is indeed less pluralism in economics.

Why are the members of the committee reluctant to value other viewpoints? It is not a result of conspiracy or malice. There must be some good explanation for the discrepancy between the committee’s view and that of outside observers. The question is whether this is a one-off poor judgment or whether we are staring at the contours of an institutional structure that is preserving, encouraging and reinforcing a particular way of doing economics.

This evidence is, of course, anecdotal.¹³⁸ We need some systematic evidence of the structures in which economists are brought up and live. The task is to investigate whether there are dialogical flaws in the economics discourse, and make suggestions for how this can be remedied through a correction of relevant institutions in order to secure an approximation of the ideal rules of discourse. If there is institutional oppression based on methodology and scientific beliefs, the origin of these beliefs must be discerned and the efforts at institutional reform located towards it.

¹³⁸ We know that it is “the end of you if people have said you’re anecdotal”, as a prominent economist remarks in an interview with the sociologist Marion Fourcade (2009: 94), commenting on the rules of the profession.

However, it should be borne in mind that it is not a primary aim of this thesis to demonstrate empirical evidence. The thesis is conditional on the empirical facts; yet it is hypothetical in its nature. That being said, I do not think the evidence presented is controversial; it seems to confirm what any casual observer of the economics discipline would expect.

The Matthew effect

In a pivotal paper, the sociologist of science Robert Merton (1968) discusses what he calls “the Matthew effect” in the sciences, i.e. that more will accrue to those who already have, due to “psychosociological” mechanisms. This takes on the form of rewards to scientists; already well-known scientists are more widely read, cited and appraised than less known colleagues, even when they have ostensibly produced the same work or discovered the same finding. Moreover, an unknown co-author of a famous scientist will not be credited for a paper, while, on the other hand, the association with a famous scientist increases the chance of a paper being credited in the first place.

Merton (1968: 61) states that some scholars are indeed eminent, in terms of skills but most notably characterized by a courageous disposition. To the extent that good and important work is correlated with certain researchers (such as Nobel prize winners), the reward system serves effective dissemination of the work by association with the author’s name.

Yet these mechanisms are clearly consistent with the formation of a hierarchical ordering of science. “A macrosocial version of the Matthew principle is apparently involved in those processes of social selection that currently lead to the concentration of scientific resources and talent” (Merton, 1968: 62). The other side of the coin is, by implication, that “from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath”. For example, the concentration of talented students and research funding at already acknowledged institutions will “create extreme difficulties” (Merton, 1968: 62) in forming new excellent centres of research. We might, then, expect a tendency of smaller research groups to be increasingly marginalized, if not extinguished.

The formation of hierarchy is anti-pluralistic in itself. The Matthew effect implies a concentration of the rewarding of researchers, e.g. through citation patterns and formal recognitions, hence tending to consolidate the core of the discipline. If a

Matthew effect exists in economics and it represents a natural “psychosociological” mechanism – some aspects of it do indeed seem hard to overcome (such as our recognizing familiar names on a paper) – this clearly represents a challenge. Yet the awareness that such mechanisms are at work is helpful if we want to institutionally counteract them, to the extent that this is possible. If we can identify the criteria by which economists judge “quality”, and show beyond reasonable doubt that these are being used in the formation of the hierarchy, we might be able to isolate apparent institutional or dialogical weaknesses. We are possibly faced with a form of a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948) – or at least a vicious circle – in which it is unclear what “quality” is at the outset, yet certain methods of evaluation that are meant to ensure quality, instead propel an arbitrary notion of quality without necessary corrections from alternative perspectives.

Journals and the gospel of St. Matthew

Having outlined the Matthew effect as a general mechanism, the question is whether it is at work in academia today. And, if so, what are its forms of manifestation? Publishing in journals has become increasingly important in modern academia. Can we observe a Matthew effect in the citation patterns of academic journals – in general, and in economics specifically?

A central factor in the world of academic journals and rankings is the “journal impact factor”. The impact factor of a journal is calculated as the number of citations to articles in that journal in a specific year, divided by the number of published articles in the journal in the two (or five, depending on discipline) preceding years (Garfield, 1994). Impact factors are used in journal rankings, such as the Academic Journal Guide (CABS, 2015: 6).¹³⁹ To the extent that papers published in high-ranked journals affect academic career prospect, citation measures are quite important for our purposes.

¹³⁹ The Academic Journal Guide 2015 (AJG) uses three different impact factor measures, the Journal Citations Report (JCR), Source Normalized Impact per Paper (SNIP) and the Scimago Journal & Country Rank (SJR), whereas the former Association of Business Schools ranking (ABS) only used JCR (CABS, 2015: 10). The ABS methodology in 2010 (ABS, 2010) stated that they started with journals that contain at least two papers submitted to the RAE in 2008. However, Wilsdon et al. (2015) state that the AJG is based on a qualitative consensus on the top journals. The REF (2015) states that there are few heterodox submissions. Lee (2007) and Lee et al. (2013) note the declining number of heterodox submissions, which is then feeding back into the journal selections and rankings.

Naturally, the impact factor says something about the importance of the work – the extent to which other scholars read the paper and find it useful for their own work – but it does not say all. One initial problem in grappling with the meaning of impact factors, is that we cannot separate the quality of the journal from the quality of the paper:

From a sociological point of view (...) one cannot exclude the possibility that citations to a paper are in fact influenced by the impact factor of the journal, a number often considered as a good indicator of the quality and visibility of the journal. It is thus possible that the citations received by a given paper not only reflect the ‘quality’ of that paper but also that of the journal in which it is published. (Larivière and Gingras, 2010: 425)

Larivière and Gingras (2010) examined the quotations of duplicate papers (i.e. identical papers that are published in different journals, a sample of 4532 pairs), and found that the papers in the highest impact journal are on average cited nearly twice as much as the paper in the lower impact journal. For the social sciences (a sample of 55 duplicates) the figure was almost threefold (10.98 for high impact compared to 3.49 for low impact, significant at the 1% level). This suggests that there is a self-reinforcing mechanism at work. Their general conclusion is that the journal in which papers are published has

(...) a strong influence on their citation rates, as duplicate papers published in high impact journals obtain, on average, twice as much citations as their identical counterparts published in journals with lower impact factors. The intrinsic value of a paper is thus not the only reason a given paper gets cited or not; there is a specific Matthew effect attached to journals and this gives to papers published there an added value over and above their intrinsic quality. (Larivière and Gingras, 2010: 424)

It seems, then, that there is a Matthew effect in the hierarchy of academic journals. There are mechanisms that ensure that a higher impact factor is given to the journals that already have a high impact factor, to some extent irrespective of the “quality” of the papers published. This is a general finding in the study for all disciplines, and in the social sciences it is conspicuous for this sample.

To what extent is there such a Matthew effect in economics journals

specifically? Richard Tol (2009) has conducted a statistical analysis of citations of authors and papers in order to answer this question. He concludes:

I find that often-cited papers are cited more often, and that often-cited authors are cited more often. The two effects strengthen one another: famous papers by famous authors are cited most. This implies that there are “increasing returns to scale” in influence, and that Merton’s (1968) Matthew effect is real and can be found in data. (Tol, 2009: 423)

The impact factor determines which journals are cited, not just the other way around, even for the same “quality”. This means that if there is already a ranking in place, in which a certain strand of thought or a particular niche has a low score, we should expect this ranking to be accentuated over time so that those who have little will have even less, *ceteris paribus*. In this way, journal impact factors seem to be biased towards the state of the art of a discipline and against minor areas and new developments.

Journal impact factors

Kapeller (2010) analyses the citation metrics used in economics and evaluates the impact thereof for heterodox economists. He notes some behaviour indicating that the system is not facilitating ideal behaviour. For example, some established authors use informal channels for submission, and some authors tailor the papers to please the editors or referees, by anticipating criticism in advance and modifying the paper accordingly.

Kapeller criticizes the Thomson Scientific Journal Impact Factor (JCR, he calls it “JIF”), one of the most commonly used indices. The index has, according to him, some obvious biases: It encourages authors to produce as many papers as possible from a given amount of material (down to “the least publishable unit”); it has an English language bias; it excludes books, reports, and a huge amount of unlisted journals, and thereby a significant share of social scientific work; wide negative attention is counted positively in the factor; and it favours empirical work containing data as opposed to theoretical and methodological work, as the former are cited more frequently (Kapeller, 2010: 1379). This leads to a range of “perverse incentives”.

On the whole, it seems that the JIF is an evaluation instrument that is at best slightly misleading but in most cases applied (especially in cases where grants, tenure, or hiring are discussed) highly arbitrary and completely unrelated to the questions at hand. (Kapeller, 2010: 1383)

Wilsdon et al. (2015) claim that a salami-slicing of papers into the least publishable unit cannot be observed in the UK. They do, however, present some evidence that the association of metrics with research funding provides a bias against female and early career researchers, respectively. Moreover, Wilsdon et al. (2015: 82) note that any assessment system can change "the research process itself in response to assessment criteria (...) for instance through a shift towards more mainstream, less risky research topics". These observations, taken together, draw the contours of a system that discourages diversity of perspectives and provides disincentives and barriers for new researchers to challenge established orthodoxy.

The JCR is based on the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), from the database Web of Science (WoS), i.e. the citations counted are from journals listed on this index. It may be a problem for heterodox economists that many of their publication outlets are not listed on the SSCI. According to Lee and Cronin (2010) there are 62 heterodox as opposed to 192 mainstreams journals on the SSCI, which is the main pool of material used in the JCR measurement of the impact factor (Wouters et al., 2015). The citation network of heterodox economists thus appears to be smaller than that of orthodox economists (at least on certain assumptions of citation patterns). It is, however, not clear whether or not this is proportional to the relative size of orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

Interestingly, heterodox scholars – although located at the periphery of the discipline – have a strong tendency to quote and relate to the centre. Dobusch and Kapeller (2012b) show that the citation practices of heterodox economists are suboptimal given the current ranking regimes; they cite orthodox journals to a very large extent, and do not boost other heterodox journals with citations, and thereby contribute to upholding the ranking order. Mainstream journals, on the other hand, have a much higher rate of intra-network citations (to other mainstream journals) and a very low citation rate to heterodox journals (Dobusch and Kapeller, 2012b). This phenomenon could be explained by Fourcade et al. (2015) in pointing to the mindset of "superior" economists; there is no need to engage with the periphery, whereas the

periphery naturally wants to engage with the core. Thus the perceived pattern to a certain extent reflects that a large part of heterodoxy's identity lies in its dichotomous opposition to orthodoxy.

What and who determine which journals are included on lists such as the SSCI? Klein and Chiang (2004) argue that the SSCI has an ideological bias towards what they have classified as social democratic periodicals and journals and against libertarian publications. They describe the process of the selection of journals as a complete black box; none of the procedure is disclosed to the public (Klein and Chiang, 2004: 142-143). Moreover, the listed criteria are demonstrably not fulfilled in practice by many journals included on the list. Klein and Chiang (2004: 142) sum up the self-reinforcing mechanism as follows:

Thus, we see citations playing a pivotal role at yet another key point in the process of academic legitimization. So far as justifying its inclusion decision goes, ISI [now JCR] can effectively pick itself up by its own bootstraps. If it includes a set of journals that cite each other, those journals and those scholars by definition become "significant." If it excludes a community of journals and scholars, they thereby remain insignificant.

Even if the scale of reference is political ideology rather than methodology, it seems that the list's grounding is in a significant sense arbitrary, yet it serves as a reference point for future listings.¹⁴⁰

The SSCI and the corresponding journal impact factor are not neutral.¹⁴¹ That metrics such as journal impact factors have some shortcomings, biases and reductive tendencies is, however, not surprising. That some of these tend to count to the disadvantage of heterodox economics and economists is unfortunate. Yet apart from having a certain scientific and positivistic flavour that might be more in line with the implicit scientific values of mainstream economics than those of heterodox economics, we should not draw too many implications from these shortcomings. The important implication that emerges, however, is the self-perpetuating mechanisms that

¹⁴⁰ Wouters et al. (2015) give a detailed review of what the databases such as WoS/SSCI include and exclude.

¹⁴¹ There are many different ways of measuring impact with the use of metrics, and some may be better than others (Wilsdon et al., 2015). The present analysis does not aim at evaluating different metrics, but rather to highlight general institutional features of research evaluation conducted in this way.

a system of evaluation based on metrics involves, reinforcing arbitrary standards of “quality” through a positive feedback mechanism once these standards are in place.¹⁴² This is the Matthew effect all over again: more to those who have and even less to those who have not.

Sociologist Stephen Cole (1983: 116-117*n*) notes that “[c]itations do not measure the ‘absolute’ or ‘objective’ quality of research, but they do measure the currently assessed value of work to colleagues who are themselves doing research.”¹⁴³ This seems to be the general consensus among bibliometricians today (Wouters et al., 2015). In light of the above arguments, this is true with some reservations. What cannot be disputed, however, is the conservatively biased notion of quality that this involves. The use of impact factors encourages more of the same. Given the Matthew effect, they support a hierarchical structure of the discipline, and in this sense it is anti-pluralistic. The incentives contribute to a concentration of content and a hierarchical ordering of the discipline.

We thereby observe that the journal ranking system and its application in practice represents an institutionalization of Feyerabend’s (2010) “consistency condition” – if it is being used for practical purposes. We have to ask, then, to what extent this ranking system affects the rest of the disciplinary order through hiring and promoting practices, research funds allocation, etc. Do the mechanisms at play lead to a hierarchy in the discipline?

Hierarchy of the sciences

The idea of a hierarchy in the sciences is an old one in the philosophy of science. The natural sciences are more mature, methodologically solidified; they are not struggling with the wishy-washy hand-waving of the social sciences, not to mention the humanities. So the story goes, or at least it used to. Even if we are now in the post-positivistic condition, Kuhn’s (1996 [1970]) view has similar implications; the social sciences are in a pre-paradigmatic state, there are methodological disagreements, and therefore no incremental progress in the terms of accumulation of puzzles solved.

¹⁴² Not to speak of the perverse incentives it arguably creates for scientific reasoning, but this is a large discussion in itself. Here we are primarily concerned with the neutrality of the system.

¹⁴³ Similarly, Wilsdon et al. (2015: 64) note: “Although no complete consensus exists in the bibliometric literature about what citation indicators and bibliometric measures exactly mean, the vast majority of bibliometric experts see citations as a proxy measure for the impact of the work on the relevant academic communities.”

Stephen Cole has done a large amount of work relating to the hierarchy of the sciences. Cole (1983) sums up his various findings and data, but he is not able to find any evidence that there is such a hierarchy, i.e. that the natural sciences have a higher rate of consensus than the social sciences. On the other hand, there is a tendency towards consensus in all disciplines, and this is maintained through the role of the evaluation and reward system (Cole, 1983).

According to Cole, the “stars” of a scientific field “determine who will be given appointments in prestigious departments, whose articles will be accepted for publication in prestigious journals, who will receive honorific awards and be admitted to honorific societies” (Cole, 1983: 137). If he is right, it is not, of course, through direct appointment that this selection takes place, but through a system of evaluation that is designed (with or without intent) to serve the views of those who sit at its top.

One of the primary mechanisms through which consensus is maintained is the practice of vesting authority in elites. When a new idea is proposed, it must be evaluated. Should the new idea become part of the consensus or should it be discarded? In the process of evaluation, some opinions count more than others. Generally, the stars of a particular discipline occupy the main gatekeeping roles. (Cole, 1983: 138)

This gatekeeping role, in economics, is currently played by the journals, through their editorial and reviewing practices. This was also Cole’s general observation. One particularly interesting finding of his was that “economics proved to be the field with the lowest level of disagreement” (Cole, 1983: 124) on the evaluation of applications for research grants, comparing 10 fields within natural and social science.

We might, therefore, say that even if we cannot see a clear hierarchy of the sciences, we can observe a certain hierarchy *within* the specific scientific disciplines, among which economics stood out already in the early 1980s. How are they faring now?

Heterodox discrimination

Given the orthodox/heterodox divide in economics, and the calls for pluralism arising largely from the epistemological and moral demands of the latter, we should investigate to what extent the value criteria are being used or abused by gatekeepers

of the discipline in discriminating against heterodox approaches. Bourdieu's view of how the orthodox tradition oppresses the heterodox tradition in the struggle for domination might serve as a negative benchmark here:

[T]he established scientific order also includes the instruments of circulation, in particular the scientific journals which, by selecting their articles in terms of the dominant criteria, consecrate productions faithful to the principles of official science, thereby continuously holding out the example of what deserves the name of science, and exercise a *de facto* censorship of heretical productions, either by rejecting them outright or by simply discouraging the intention of even trying to publish them by means of the definition of the publishable which they set forward. (Bourdieu, 1975: 30)

Does this description hold water for the discipline of economics? A first indication is given by Reardon's (2008) survey of heterodox economists, which assesses their perceived treatment by mainstream journals. The survey response was rather low,¹⁴⁴ and there may have been a certain selection bias among the respondents: those who had something, probably negative, to report, reported it. At any rate, the general response was that you have to speak a certain language, i.e. write formalistic papers using constrained optimization, in order to take part in the conversation in mainstream journals. The general impression is that it seems to have become near impossible to publish in a mainstream journal without conforming to mainstream methodology; rejections were frequently accompanied by impolite remarks, anger or ridicule. By comparison, some respondents remarked that they found heterodox journals cliquish, but the general impression was that they were more open-minded and willing to engage with opposing views.

The survey supports the image of a top-down organization of economics, in which the values on the top are enforced on lower levels. Hence we might expect a narrowing of the discourse in the top-ranked journals. One issue is that the mainstream journals are not able to find any competent referees for heterodox papers, so a paper can be dismissed "peremptorily" (Reardon, 2008: 191). According to Reardon, the survey indicates that there is an *ideological* entry barrier to the

¹⁴⁴ 27 of 100 US heterodox economists asked to partake responded.

discipline.¹⁴⁵ Thus Reardon (2008: 191) states that: “The problem is that whereas heterodox economists understand mainstream economics (...) mainstream economists remain ignorant of heterodox economics due to lack of training and education.” This ignorance is an important point. This effective barrier resulting from a lack of knowledge points to the realm of teaching and curricula as a remedy, which we will return to below. Recalling Habermas’ rules of argumentation, this indicates that not all participants that are competent to take part in the conversation are allowed to, and through some inverted logic this is due to the fact that the gatekeepers of mainstream economics are not competent in the language of heterodox economists rather than the other way around. Reardon’s point on the entry barriers to the discipline is in line with Cole’s findings above. To the extent that this survey is representative, it confirms Bourdieu’s gloomy outlook – but more work is required for clear conclusions to be reached. We need to look at the wider systematic mechanisms at play in the discipline.

Research assessment in the UK

We have caught a glimpse of the workings of the journal system and seen that they tend, by the nature of the institutions, to disfavour heterodox economists. If journals were merely venues for exchange between like-minded scholars, this would not have posed a huge institutional problem. It takes on all the more significance when we look at the role of journal publications for other areas of the discipline, such as hiring/promotion and research funds allocation.

Since 1986, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), along with the corresponding institutions for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, have undertaken a periodic assessment exercise to determine the quality of the research produced at UK universities, as a foundation for research funding decisions. This undertaking used to be called the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), but starting from the 2014 exercise it goes under the name of the Research Excellence Framework (REF). The majority of research funds from HEFCE are “Quality Related” Funding, the main determinant of which is the REF (RAE) (HEFCE, 2015a). Thus the importance of this exercise for the life of academic institutions can hardly be understated.

¹⁴⁵ I assume he means that the ideology at work is orthodox methodology, not the political dimension mentioned by Klein and Chang (2004) above.

The REF in 2014 was comprised of 36 subject specific subpanels assessing work for in total 52,061 academic staff from 154 UK universities (REF, 2014).

The panels assessed the quality of outputs against the criteria of ‘originality, significance and rigour’. The assessment was based on peer review of the outputs. Some panels considered the number of times the output had been cited, as contextual information to support peer review. (REF, 2014)

One might discuss whether extensive quality control of research is a good use of resources. The main question for us, however, is: what does *quality* mean in this regard?

Let us have a quick glimpse of the sub-panel for economics and econometrics’ summary of their assessment. They state:

The sub-panel was impressed by the consistently high level of rigour which was exhibited by the vast majority of papers submitted. However, technical rigour alone was not sufficient to guarantee a high grade. Only outputs that exhibited appropriate levels of originality and significance in addition to using rigorous methods were graded as internationally excellent or world-leading. This was in line with the published criteria, and also reflects worldwide trends in economic research, where rigour is now viewed as a necessary but not sufficient condition for excellence. (REF, 2015: 50)

We note that “rigour” is a key element. “Originality” and “significance” are also required. The meaning of these concepts in this setting is not immediately clear. Moreover, I note the panel’s remark of an overall reduction in submissions from 2008, and the observation of “a small number” of submissions in economic history, and an “even smaller number” of submissions in heterodox economics (REF, 2015: 50). Whether or not the overall reduction in submissions and the small number of submissions in these areas are related, does not emerge. Although there is no explicit mention of the Diamond List, ABS, or similar rankings, the general ideas of economists (at least the ones on the panel) on concepts such as “rigorous methods” and excellent research are noted.

The REF conducts independent peer review of all submitted works. Whereas earlier assessments may have relied more on the use of citation data, these are now used sparingly:

Sub-panel 18 [economics and econometrics] was the only one in Main Panel C [social sciences] which made use of citation data. These were provided on a comparable basis from a leading commercial dataset. (...) Though the citation data were useful in confirming a number of marginal judgements, there were very few cases where the presence or absence of citations, or their number, affected the grade awarded to the output. (REF, 2015: 51)

This procedure as such is perhaps not a problem. The problems arise only to the extent that the notion of quality involved is biased towards mainstream economics. It can be noted here that the quality assessment was in line with the citation data when it was used (confirming some marginal cases). Does this indicate that the impact factor is an excellent measure of quality as perceived by the economists on the panel? Not in itself. However, HEFCE (2015b) has carried out a correlation analysis between various metric indicators and the peer-review based REF 2014, in order to evaluate the predictive power of these indicators for the result. Among the highest scores for all disciplines are the Spearman correlations between economics & econometrics and SNIP¹⁴⁶ (0.665), and economics & econometrics and SJR¹⁴⁷ (0.751). Economics and clinical medicine are the two disciplines that show the highest correlations across all metrics (HEFCE, 2015b: 12). This points to a remarkable consensus among economists. The consensus could either reflect a discipline particularly well-equipped for the identification of objective quality, or the sign of a remarkable consistency in the system, which reinforces the tautology that keeps the system intact, and by which it legitimizes its own existence: quality is quality.

Taylor (2011), who noted the same tendency of harmony between the indicators in RAE 2008, simply recommends replacing peer review by a journal quality indicator. We are facing one profound difficulty here: if economists in general agree on what quality research is and who the quality researchers are, it is hard to

¹⁴⁶ This is the “source-normalised impact per paper”, which measures the ratio of citation count to citation potential in the relevant subject field.

¹⁴⁷ The SCImago Journal Rank “measures the scientific influence of journals, accounting for citation count and importance of journal citation” (HEFCE, 2015b: 6)

suggest that they use different criteria. Why would they? If heterodox economists as a group have a different view, does this mean that they do not belong to the field of economics at all (do they simply not have the competency to take part in the conversation)?

Once quality is defined and there is considerable consensus on what it entails, the production and reproduction of quality at the top of the hierarchy becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The REF (RAE) procedure at least reflects, if not contributes to, a hierarchy of UK research institutions. Indeed, the whole point of the endeavour is consonant with having a hierarchical ordering. However, we have reason to doubt that the criteria used in the evaluation are sufficiently neutral. What are the consequences?

Diamonds are forever

Fred Lee has undertaken a substantial amount of work on the use and development of journal rankings. His analyses of the research assessment system in the UK are of particular interest in view of our current purposes (Lee and Harley, 1998; Lee, 2007; Lee, Pham and Gu, 2013).

Lee (2007) notes that there is a high correlation between the publications from the economic departments' staff on the Diamond (1989) list of core economics journals and the level of international excellence assigned to the departments by the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). He suggests that this points to the Diamond List being used as the criterion for research excellence. There is also a negative correlation between heterodox and methodology submissions and research excellence, which provides some further substance for this thesis (Lee, 2007: 313). Lee concludes that: "if top journals are identified, top departments are simultaneously identified" (Lee, 2007: 323). What is it that makes heterodox work so poor, and mainstream work so good?

These correlations in themselves only provide some pointers. Yet there is more evidence from Lee's body of work, which shows that since the RAE started in 1986, there has been a persistent reduction in the role of non-mainstream economics on the British academic scene and their chances of flourishing within its foremost institutions.

Lee shows that already in 1994,

(...) all the departments ranked 5*, 5 and 4 and seven of the 11 3-ranked departments in the 2001 RAE emphasised publications in the Diamond List journals and had restricted their hiring (and promotion) almost entirely to appropriately qualified neoclassical economists; and of these 36 departments, 21 would not hire a heterodox economist. (Lee, 2007: 316)

In other words, there is a marked change in hiring practices after the Research Assessment Exercise was introduced.

Lee and Harley (1998) note that the RAE originally was perceived as a challenge to the established order in economics, under the auspices of the Royal Economic Society (RES), and suggest something tantamount to a coup of the RAE committee by RES, which over the years has led to the removal of all heterodox elements on the panel. They stated that “the message is clear; improvement in research rating is highly correlated with the near exclusive hiring of mainstream economists” (Lee and Harley, 1998: 44). They predicted that in order for non-mainstream economics to survive in English economics departments, the RAE would have to be abolished – or at least the dominance of RES in it would have to be restrained (Lee and Harley, 1998). Their pessimistic prognoses have to a large extent been validated by subsequent developments. No conspiracy is required in order to explain the adverse mechanisms at play.

Lee et al. (2013) develop a model for the economics profession in the UK, which attempts at explaining the cumulative causation behind the dominance of mainstream economics. Lee et al. (2013) show, firstly, that the composition of the assessment panel has changed from the RAE in 2001 to the REF in 2014,¹⁴⁸ involving an increasing number of Diamond List submissions among its members – from roughly half (18/38) to roughly two-thirds (41/60) – at the same time as the heterodox submissions have gone markedly down (Lee et al, 2013: 709). For the 2014 REF, there were eight editors or associate editors of a Diamond List journal on the panel, as opposed to one in 2001 and two in 2008.¹⁴⁹ There was also a heterodox component in 2001, which is absent from 2008 onwards.

Moreover, Lee et al. (2013: 699) point out that over the course of the RAEs,

¹⁴⁸ The paper was published before the REF 2014 assessments were completed, so it does not discuss the outcomes of this.

¹⁴⁹ Note that the number of panel members in economics has gone up from 10 to 15 for the REF.

the number of universities that obtained the Quality Related funding that the exercise provides the basis for, has declined by 30 percent for economics. This indicates a tendency towards higher concentration. At the same time we see a gradual removal of the heterodox component from the centre of the economics stage. From 1996 to 2012, the number of heterodox economists in research rated departments declined by 70%, whereas the number in non-research rated departments remained the same. In 2012, 9 of the 13 departments classified as “elite” and “near-elite” by Lee et al. (2013) had no heterodox economist on staff. Three others had a total of seven heterodox economists, and Cambridge stood out with eight. In the “middling departments” the picture is similar, whereas “the number of heterodox economists located in non-economics departments increased by nearly 240%” (Lee et al, 2013: 708). Since 1992, there has been a marked increase in economics departments with no heterodox economist on staff.

Lee et al. provide the following summary of the mechanisms at work in the panel’s evaluation:

What made the convergence of assessors’ assessments possible was that they drew on their commonly held values and perceptions on what was good economics and high-quality economic research and which journals had the greatest international reputations. This is not, however, to say that they substituted DL [Diamond List] of core economic journals for their judgment of a submission’s research quality. But the fact is that most assessors satisfied more than one of the following: 1) published in DL journals (...); 2) agreed on the benchmark statement that defines what is economics and especially good economics (...); and 3) were members of departments that i) emphasise publishing in DL journals (...) or simply highlighted mostly if not only the DL journals in their RA5a submissions to the RAE (with a side note saying that the department would continue to publish in core journals), ii) that in the 2001 and 2008 RAEs frequently identified DL journals as having international standing (...) and iii) that based hiring and promotion near exclusively on publishing in DL journals. (Lee et al., 2013: 711-712)

The general finding is a persistent movement towards a stronger hierarchy in UK academic economics, which is reinforced by a continuously higher emphasis on certain criteria associated with the core of mainstream economics. The suggested conclusion is that journal rankings (impact factors, Diamond List, etc.) are used as

criteria for research assessment – when not explicitly, then because the notion of quality of the members of the assessment panel nevertheless tends to be in line with these indices. It is shown that hiring and promotion decisions also, naturally – if a department wants to be funded – are based to a large extent on the same criteria.

Thus viewed, there are three main effects of the RAE/REF system:

1) the progressive elimination of heterodox economics from research rated economics departments and from UK economics in general, 2) the concentration of economic research in fewer departments and the homogenisation of this research across departments and 3) the dominance of UK economics by a few elite and near-elite departments. (Lee et al., 2013: 712)

Particularly interesting is that this seems to have been a more or less inevitable development from the time the evaluation system was created. The bias against heterodox economics (or any minority) and the tendency to hierarchy is built into the foundations of the assessment exercise, i.e. the system is transporting the Matthew effect quite effectively.

Lee et al. (2013: 715) claim that the institutions in which heterodox economists were previously flourishing have been systemically eradicated or transformed over the last twenty years, thereby threatening the professional identity and the possibility of an academic life for economists who do not conform to the mainstream norm. The authors phrase the issue quite dramatically: “The issue is not about who is right or wrong with regards to economic theory; it is about the right to be wrong or possibly wrong without fear of genocidal punishment” (Lee et al., 2013: 715). The relevance for pluralism, as we have discussed and defined it, is clear. There is a de facto regulation of the allowed contributions to the field, contrary to the spirit of academic liberty of thought and expression, which inhibits truth advancement. The following sums it up:

In the end, a paradigmatic homogenised discipline is a harrowing outcome of the RAE and QAA. Intellectual diversity, free inquiry and the principle that there is no humanly accessible truth that is not in principle open to challenge are indispensable to the achievement of the central purposes of a university. Hence, an intellectual faction that has a monopoly on truths and wisdom and utilises state and/or

organisational power (such as control over research and teaching funding or university budgets) to maintain and enhance this monopoly, that rejects the unsettled character of all human knowledge, and that rejects a diversity of approaches to unsettled questions is not compatible with the idea and nature of a university. (Lee, 2007: 323)

The institutionalization of mainstream economics has created a bulwark that protects, facilitates and rewards more of the same mainstream economics. If the aim is to ensure that quality research is promoted, then quality research is being defined in the process, and hence other approaches are excluded – firstly on arbitrary grounds, later based on this institutional practice that has an arbitrary grounding. The economists are made ignorant of many relevant themes as the process goes on and the subject becomes narrower. This is clearly contrary to the spirit of pluralism in both the epistemological and moral dimension.

The conclusion throughout Lee's work on economics in the UK is that the mechanisms in the discipline work towards the systematic elimination of heterodox economics. Against this background, we can understand Lee's proposal of a live-and-let live pluralism (discussed in chapter 2) as the only way out for heterodoxy. However, as we have stated above, the cause for pluralism must be distinguished from the cause for heterodoxy. Lee's general thoughts on the "idea of the university" and the dangers of intellectual monopoly are very much in line with the pluralist spirit. However, we do not combat these by separating out heterodoxy as a sphere of its own. We need to go to the roots of the value system governing the discipline.

Wilsdon et al. (2015) has carried out a comprehensive independent review for HEFCE on the role of peer review versus metrics in the assessment of research outputs. They note that peer review favours dominant paradigms and prestigious institutions (as well as giving a gender bias), and that this bias is strengthened by the Matthew effect.¹⁵⁰ They also note that the selection of peer reviewers might lead to a bias in terms of lack of experts in some areas of the field. In general, they recommend a supportive role for metrics (quantitative impact indicators) in the REF, but argue that this cannot (at least currently) replace the qualitative narrative based on peer review. However, the authors advise strongly against the use of Journal Impact Factors and rather recommend the use of article-level measures (Wilsdon et al., 2015).

¹⁵⁰ Blind peer review is seen to diminish some of these biases.

Metrics are a poor predictor of the outcome of peer review for many disciplines; for economics, however, as noted above, the correlation between the results of the two approaches is among the highest (HEFCE, 2015b). At any rate, it is clear that a procedure such as the REF can never sufficiently correct for the biases in quality evaluation that arise as a result of the established notions of quality among peers as this naturally informs both qualitative peer review and quantitative indicators of impact in the field, especially if the field has a strong consensus and the indicators have as high a correlation as they do for economics.¹⁵¹

The superiority of economists

So much for the hierarchy of economics in the UK. Fourcade, Ollion and Algan (2015) provide a thorough analysis of the hierarchy of the economics profession in the US, in which they compare American economists to American sociologists and political scientists. The authors conclude that the discipline is relatively insulated, and hierarchically ordered within, as well as being based on the top of the hierarchy of the social sciences – in their own perception, and in the sense that economists are better off materialistically and enjoy by far the most political influence of the social scientists, which contributes to boosting their confidence. In addition, the discipline is tightly managed from the top, and makes scientific claims based on formal methods. These factors constitute what the authors call “the superiority of economists” (Fourcade et al., 2015).

The insularity of economics is measured by bibliometric data comparing cross-citations to sociology and political science with these disciplines’ cross-citations to economics and each other. The general finding is that economists cite work in other disciplines far less than sociologists and political scientists do.¹⁵² Moreover, the top journals cite each other to a significantly larger extent than in the other disciplines. These two factors point to insularity and an internal hierarchy, respectively. The authors conclude that economists have less regard for interdisciplinarity than the other social scientists.

¹⁵¹ On a different note, Wilsdon et al. (2015) state that research fund allocation through the REF assessment can be seen as efficient compared to a situation in which funding is largely determined on the basis of time-consuming research grant applications. Without taking a stance on this question, it is a pertinent observation that scarce funds do indeed have to be allocated between competing ends according to some evaluation criteria.

¹⁵² When economists do cite other disciplines, it is normally, and increasingly, finance journals.

Such results are consistent with the notion that economists, with their distinctive confidence in the superiority of their own discipline, are less likely to feel the need to rely on other disciplines or even to acknowledge their existence. (...) [T]his dynamic is characteristic of unequal situations: those in a central position within a field fail to notice peripheral actors, and are also largely unaware of the principles that underpin their own domination (...). Instead, they tend to rationalize power and inequality as a “just” product of merit, whether effort or talent. (Fourcade et al., 2015: 95)

We noted this tendency for the centre not to engage with the periphery, whereas the converse is frequent, when it comes to citation patterns (Dobusch and Kapeller, 2012b). Fourcade et al. (2015) supplement this analysis by looking at economists’ position (or positioning) within the hierarchy of social science.

The “hierarchy within” economics is analysed along three dimensions by the authors, namely hiring practices, journal publishing practices and the structure of the professional association. Regarding the latter, it is shown that the American Economic Association (AEA) is governed by the top universities.¹⁵³

When it comes to hiring practices, Fourcade et al. (2015) claim that top US universities only recruit from universities with an equal or better standing, suggesting that the economics profession can be analysed as kinship systems. This is viewed as a reflection of economists’ inherent belief in evaluation systems and in the evaluation of their peers. The mechanisms that have brought someone to a degree at, say, MIT, are safeguards of quality, and hence the diploma with the university logo stamped on it should be sufficient testament to the abilities of its owner; “‘information’ about candidates is deemed homogenous and therefore inherently reliable” (Fourcade et al., 2015: 98). On the hiring practices, the authors summarize:

Three conclusions emerge. First, hierarchy is much more clearly defined in economics. Second, the field of economics is horizontally more integrated, with strong norms of reciprocity and cohesion in recruitment processes. Third, these norms sustain a high stability of interdepartmental prestige hierarchies over time. (Fourcade et al., 2015: 97)

¹⁵³ 72 per cent of the nonappointed council members in the AEA were from the top five departments, whereas the figures for APSA [the American Political Science Association] and ASA [the American Sociological Association] were 12 and 20 per cent, respectively (Fourcade et al., 2015: 100).

Moreover, the market for publications is most concentrated in economics. 28.7% of all publications in *QJE* and 37.5% of all publications in *JPE* are from authors working in the top five economics departments; and 45.4% of *JPE* papers are from authors' with PhDs from these institutions, whereas the corresponding number for *QJE* is 57.6%.

In other words, we clearly see a concentration at the top of the economics profession (in the US) and a top-down orientation in the discipline. Fourcade et al. diagnose the problem as follows:

An economist might tend to regard this concentration as evidence that, across economics departments, intellectual strength is more concentrated in the top departments than is the case across sociology departments. Others might highlight alternative metrics that are also used for evaluation (books may be more important in some disciplines) and the existence of multiple criteria of worth, which are only imperfectly reflected in the hierarchy of scholarly journals. Economists, by contrast, tend to see institutionalized hierarchies as emergent, truthful indicators of some underlying worth, and consequently are obsessed with them. (Fourcade et al., 2015: 98)

This is a key point: economists are obsessed with hierarchies, which they see as “truthful indicators of some underlying worth”. If this is true for the discipline as a whole, it would further warrant our concerns about the neutrality of exercises such as the peer review of the REF. Where does this belief in and obsession with hierarchies come from? The authors suggest that “the rational-formalist language of the economics profession underpins its universalistic aspirations” (Fourcade et al., 2015: 110). Is there a clear link between monism, formalism and dominance after all?

Fourcade et al.'s (2015) analysis is confined to the US economics profession (although the discussion of journals is of immediate global relevance, since these are global in reach). How does it bear on matters elsewhere? Fourcade (2006: 147, original emphasis) deals with the globalization of the economics discipline, and aims to show “*how its very internationalism feeds into the intellectual and professional dynamics of economics*”, and argues that

(...) three factors have been critical to the institutionalization of economics on a global scale: (1) the establishment of a broadly universalistic rhetoric within economic science, (2) the transformation of economic knowledge into a technology of political and bureaucratic power, and (3) the existence of transnational linkages dominated by the United States. (Fourcade, 2006: 156)

The diffusion of a global discipline is facilitated by “isomorphism”, i.e. the institutions are structured in the same way (Fourcade, 2006: 153). Although the formal organization is the same, the content might vary locally. What regards formalism, the fact that economists all over the world are speaking the same symbolic language makes it easier for them to communicate. Moreover, the abstractness and non-specificity of economic theories give an image of applicability regardless of context. Fourcade (2006: 159) states that the use of formalist language gives “symbolic effectiveness” to those who command it and this “abstraction authorizes the creative redefinition of the professional domain”. The result is a form of creative destruction of the field, which supplants the old local organization and reconstructs it according to its own professional model, which now has global aspirations.

Furthermore, Fourcade (2006: 167, original emphasis) notes the key role of economists in society: “*the state itself has been redefined as a key professional terrain for economists*”. Fourcade et al. (2015) also point out the growing link between the discipline and the financial industry, and economists’ role as advisors for governments. We shall leave aside these wider societal roles of economists for our purposes.

At any rate, Fourcade (2006: 185) shows “the ‘global diffusion’ of economics through the institutionalization of specialized economics curricula, government organizations, professional associations, and so on.” This leads to the suggestion that the hierarchical structure that we see in the US economics profession is only the tip of the iceberg; the laws determining the mechanisms at this centre of modern economics trickle down to the whole of the globalized discipline. The further analysis of this must be done elsewhere; the discussion above suffices for the purposes at hand.

View from the top of the pyramid

To sum up, the sociological classics, Merton and Cole, showed us the workings of the reward system in science. The Matthew effect induces a hierarchy within disciplines,

and the gatekeepers in the journals ensure that consensus is maintained. The hierarchy and the consensus are indeed particularly strong in economics. The hierarchy has arbitrary roots and is reinforcing itself in a highly conservative manner. This poses a high obstacle for minorities in the discipline; indeed, it poses a high obstacle for pluralism.

Even if the strong hierarchy is to some extent wilfully engineered, it has unintended consequences. The self-perceived “superiority” of economists is a consequence of the way the hierarchy currently works. There is one aspect of this that we have not yet touched upon, namely the training of economists, i.e. issues of curriculum and pedagogy. The neglected “different views” on evaluation that Fourcade et al. (2015) invoked above can draw on sundry criteria of value. The lack of exposure to alternatives in the training of economists makes them less likely to appreciate these different criteria. They might be blissfully unaware that such criteria even exist. To return to the point of departure: the radical economist had his application for promotion rejected because the committee, for reasons that were to a large extent beyond its members’ control, simply could not recognize the quality of his work.

If the narrowing of economics curricula is a side effect of the workings of the hierarchy, then it might be possible to some extent to disentangle questions of training from the system for quality evaluation of research. It is at this point that pluralism stands a chance of intervening; this will be the topic below. First, we need to compare the ideal rules of discourse that we established in the previous chapter with the institutions in economics established above in order to conclude on its merits as an institutional approximation of these rules.

The following excerpt from a private letter from the 2014 Nobel laureate for economics, Jean Tirole, to the French minister of research elliptically sums up the situation I have described. Tirole wrote the letter in response to an effort by French heterodox economists – the French Association for Political Economy (FAPE) – to be evaluated as their own discipline in the French national research assessment:

It is specially important for the community of academic (...) researchers to be endowed with a single scientific assessment standard, based on a ranking of the journals of the discipline and on an external assessment by internationally prominent peers. It is inconceivable for me that France would recognize two communities within

the same discipline. The quality of research ought to be appraised on the basis of publications, compelling each researcher to face the assessment of his peers. This constitu[t]es the very foundation of scientific progress in all disciplines. Trying to sidestep such judgment encourages relativism of knowledge, the antechamber of obscurantism. Self- proclaimed “heterodox” economists have to comply with this fundamental principle of science. For them, the objective of the creation of a new section of the National Council of Universities is to escape such discipline. (Tirole, 2014: 1)

Based upon the letter, the minister withdrew her support for FAPE, albeit with some promise of improvement of the conditions of heterodoxy in the academy.

One striking feature of Tirole’s letter is that it is more or less devoid of justification apart from what Tirole himself finds “conceivable”. He is not arguing for why we need a single assessment standard, nor, indeed, for why this should be based on a ranking of journals and peer-review. Tirole does not seem to have any reservations about the values that might already be entrenched in evaluation procedures based on journal publications. Rather, he states that the effort of FAPE “encourages relativism of knowledge”. As we shall see in the next chapter in the discussion of intellectual development, knowledge is indeed relative in a way Tirole does not acknowledge.

If this statement of Tirole’s, wielding his prize to speak on behalf of the profession in a private letter to the minister, is in fact representative of mainstream economists, then the solidity of the power pyramid in economics is no wonder.

Economics – an ideal critical discourse?

The purpose of the previous chapter was to outline criteria for institutions consonant with pluralism. In this chapter, I have sought to evaluate some of the central institutions of the profession. It is time to compare the ideal with the actual.

The institutional ideal sought to encompass justice in the academy and the epistemic effectiveness of the scientific discourse. Regarding the former, a main criterion is that the institutions are neutral with regard to different schools of thought. This is clearly not the case in economics. The system as a whole, governed by the Matthew effect, is biased towards one set of methodological values that it preserves and sets up as a neutral benchmark of quality. Insofar as heterodox economists

effectively lack the *right* to partake in this discourse, the discipline fails on justice. Regarding the epistemological condition, it has not been irrevocably demonstrated that epistemic effectiveness is served by pluralism. However, our conception of pluralism means that alternatives should be, not only tolerated but also encouraged and validated through critical discourse. The discipline seems to fail at this point too. Let us return to the specific standards we drew upon and comment more closely.

I stated that there are three ways in which exclusion of heterodox economics by orthodox economics can be interpreted: i) legitimately, according to demands of efficient communication; ii) strategically, as a result of orthodox efforts to retain discursive power; or iii) as a result of systematically distorted communication. To evaluate this, let us first recall Habermas' rules of *process*:

- 3.1 Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in the discourse.
- 3.2 a) Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatsoever.
 - b) Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatsoever into the discourse.
 - c) Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires and needs.
- 3.3 No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in (3.1) and (3.2).

How does the discipline fare measured against the ideal rules of discourse, which are (according to Habermas) implied by our communicative rationality?

In some cases one might suspect that mathematical competence is an issue for heterodox economists. However, we have seen that exclusions are based upon methodological values, not ability (although this must naturally happen all the time – to orthodox as well as heterodox economists). When it comes to publishing in top-ranked mainstream journals as such, there seems to be no reasoned ground for exclusion on this basis.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, institutional restrictions on participation are an empirical requirement for scientific communication, and are as such consonant with case i) above. In other words, such exclusion does not warrant concluding that discourse is obviously flawed.

¹⁵⁴ In the case of local, specialized discourses, one might of course deem many economists – heterodox or orthodox – insufficiently competent to contribute to the discussion.

The question of competence is particularly interesting with regard to the case in which the radical economist was deemed “not competent” for professorship, even if his knowledge of orthodox as well as heterodox economics is outstanding. In a backward logic, the judges of competency were not sufficiently competent to see this. The removal of status in this way serves to limit the range of discourse; it invokes the crucial, and very difficult, question of community membership. Yet the looming conclusion is that the gatekeeping journals prevent *competent* people from entry to the discipline on the wrong premises by unjustifiably imposing the criteria for membership. Behind the gates lies nothing less than the pathway to an academic career as an economist, insofar as publishing in these journals play a key role in hiring and promoting decisions and the allocation of research funds.¹⁵⁵

At any rate, the right to take part in discourse does not by itself guarantee the right to say anything you want, but this right is supplied by rule 3.2. Evidence from Reardon (2008) that heterodox authors are simply ridiculed by mainstream journal editors, along with Kapeller’s (2010) point on “preference falsification”, suggests that there are significant restrictions on this in practice. As Bourdieu (1975: 30) warned, there is indeed a *de facto* censorship of heterodoxy that works “either by rejecting them outright or by simply discouraging the intention of even trying to publish them by means of the definition of the publishable which they set forward”. This is anti-pluralistic. With regard to 3.3, heterodox economists are faced with coercion from departments and the REF process, to the extent that – if we follow Lee’s analysis – heterodox economists are faced with the choice of either abiding by mainstream methodological values or be effectively silenced and institutionally purged. These examples might indicate that the exclusion is strategic (case ii) and arises as a result of conscious efforts to retain discursive power, and hence the lifeworldly foundation of scientific communication is being encroached upon.

It is, however, not unambiguous that this is the case. The possibility of systematically distorted communication requires that the exclusion is unconscious and that it is caused by a repressed identity crisis, and is typical of situations of unequal

¹⁵⁵ There are two conceivable ways out of this situation. One is by changing the criteria by which the gatekeepers judge quality and competency. The other is by changing the role of journals in the hierarchy. When it comes to the REF, this is a question beyond the control of the economics profession (although the criteria on which the peer reviewing takes place could be changed somewhat); when it comes to hiring practices, it might change the weighing of top-ranked articles as against other criteria for competence, but not eliminate the need for Quality articles as a means to obtain research funding.

distributions of power. We assume that scientists have identities as disinterested pursuers of truth. For economists, an identity crisis could then arise if there is a looming threat that the established methods for truth pursuit, which have been taken for granted, would be deemed insufficient if faced with thorough examination. Jamie Morgan has provided a telling analysis that implicitly suggests that this might in fact be the situation (AHE, 2014). Morgan shows how the CORE curriculum project, financed by the Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET), has come to adapt the radical change in economics implied by INET's original founding statement, by reinterpreting the call for change in a way that retains much of the essence of orthodox theory and the way it is taught. Thus the impression is given that there is consensus on how to resolve the problems of the discipline – and that the problem does indeed need resolving, whereas this is in fact a manufactured pseudo-consensus.¹⁵⁶ There is no obvious reason to believe that the effort is insincere on the part of the leaders of the project. It can be (at least partly) understood psychologically, as an effort to avoid an uncomfortable confrontation with questions of professional identity insofar as this is shaped by orthodox methodological values.

Habermas uses family relations to give examples of systematically distorted communication. Thus the analogy is limited, yet suggestive.

We can only understand this process if we follow its intra-psychic traces and clarify how unconscious defense mechanisms against conflicts work and intervene in communicative action. However, conflicts of identity, on the one hand, and the distorted communicative structures within which such conflicts smolder, on the other, are part of a circular process. The conflicts (...) cause the systematic distortion, yet can be traced back to deficiencies of ego organization (...), which in turn were produced in deviant formative processes, that is, in families with distorted communicative structures. (Habermas, 2001: 169-170)

The pathological terminology does not seem fully in place when we talk about academic professions, and I noted in the introduction that it would be all too easy to

¹⁵⁶ “This *pseudo-consensus* is attained at the expense of redeeming the universal validity claims of intelligibility, sincerity and normative rightness on which the recognition of the background consensus of a successful language game depends. What must not become manifest is the systematic distortion of the validity claims” (Habermas, 2001: 167). A possible limitation of this scenario is that heterodox economists in no way contribute to the impression that there is a consensus.

resort to mass psychology in our account of the discipline's workings. Yet the professional identity of economists is shaped precisely through education. Habermas states that in order to understand the "intergenerational transmission of communicative and identity disturbances" we need to grasp the "developmental logic of the pathologies that are caused by (or are corollaries of) unfavourable conditions of socialization" (Habermas, 2001: 170).

Thus if there is an element of systematically distorted communication, we may expect to find the causes for this in economics education. There is, then, more hope for resolution than if the oppression is strategic. However, all three cases seem to have some relevance to the situation and this suggests that an amalgam of forces is in play. This does, however, mean that some aspects of the situation can be remedied. The following chapter is based upon the premise that there is a remedy in curriculum reform; the final chapter contextualizes what it would mean that dominance is maintained strategically.

At any rate, there is no symmetry and reciprocity between the orthodox and the heterodox in the discipline of economics. The institutional regulations of the discipline do not enable empirical conditions that approximate the ideal speech situation, in which the unforced force of the better argument prevails. Overall, the analysis indicates dialogical shortcomings due to poor institutions and suggests that the discipline of economics fails the moral condition of pluralism. Yet, as noted, the Habermasian framework does not yield clear institutional guidance and hence the indications above are cursory. How does the situation look in the light of Longino's four institutional requirements for criticism?

1. *Venues*

There are certainly clear venues for publication of original research and of responding to this research within the professional community. Economists frequently attend conferences where they present conference papers that are, thereafter, frequently published in peer-reviewed journals, and the journal publication procedures are well established. A requirement for Longino is that venues are undisturbed by vested interests. Insofar as the vested interests in society are disjointed from the interests of economists, this question has not been addressed in the foregoing analysis. Moreover, the clear hierarchy of journals serves to separate the (perceived) wheat from the (perceived) chaff in terms of original research and criticism. We have seen that

bibliometric methods have shortcomings and give some perverse incentives, and that the ranking system fuels the Matthew effect. This in itself does not, however, keep the venues from working as they are supposed to – with the proviso that vested interests external to the discipline play no part.

2. *Uptake*

This analysis has not addressed how well the economics discipline responds to criticism as it arises from within the core, in the established venues. However, the satisfaction of the uptake criterion requires a change in central beliefs over time. Although the relative constancy of the methodological core of mainstream economics since the marginal revolution, and slow adaptation to some major anomalies (such as financial and ecological crises) despite substantial criticism might suggest poor uptake, mainstream economists might perceive adequate change in the growth of new techniques and fields such as behavioural economics, experimental economics, complexity economics, etc. From an observer perspective it might seem that prevailing economic methodology has served to detach economics from a commitment to reality (regardless of ontological viewpoints). However, from a participant perspective, this detachment may not be perceived as problematic because of the discursively determined ordering of evaluation criteria, in which mathematical and statistical rigour trumps realisticness of description in many cases. Economists' evaluation of progress is a matter of the standards employed, which are shaped in the discourse. Hence, an objective judgment of uptake is hard to conduct. Yet again, the crucial issue is the *range* of criticism that is accepted more than the response to the accepted criticism.¹⁵⁷

However, insofar as the need to boost citation rates is a priority for journal editors as well as for researchers in advancing their careers, this may provide disincentives to publish and submit comments, rejoinders, letters, etc., which probably have a lower citation potential than article contributions. This would restrain the venues for and uptake of criticism. Moreover, the noted incentives to opt for safe

¹⁵⁷ However, my first hand experience with criticizing mainstream economics in Norway, suggests that criticism can find good outlets (e.g. in the main Norwegian economics journal, *Samfunnsøkonomen*), but it is typically not responded to, dismissively or affirmatively. This indicates poor uptake of and deficient venues for a certain spectrum of criticism.

mainstream topics in order to get published further restrict the potential range of criticism.

3. Public standards

The prevailing methodological values seem to be clear, in the sense that practitioners know, at least tacitly, how research is evaluated. In fact, there is remarkably strong agreement among economists on this issue. The problem here is, again, these values themselves. At any rate, for heterodox economists the values seem to be unfair and insufficiently justified. So the main issue for the economics profession remains the question of the range of permitted values and their relative constancy and responsiveness to criticism.

4. Tempered equality

What seems evident, however, is that economists at the top of the disciplinary hierarchy – the gatekeepers – do exclude heterodox economics from discursive interaction. They do so mostly by reference to scientific value criteria and by means of the Matthew effect as manifested in the journal system, etc. Even the rudest dismissals of heterodox theorists from mainstream journals, such as “[h]ow dare you challenge the assumption that firms are profit maximizing?” (Reardon, 2008), refer to core assumptions of orthodox economics. The problem is the limited range of criteria deployed.

Recall the strict demands for tempered equality, the Mill-Feyerabend principle as stated by Longino:

[A] community must not only treat its acknowledged members as equally capable of providing persuasive and decisive reasons and must do more than be open to the expression of multiple points of view; it must also take active steps to ensure that alternative points of view are developed enough to be a source of criticism and new perspectives. Not only must potentially dissenting voices not be discounted; they must be cultivated. (Longino, 2002: 132)

It is hard to delineate the proper range of a discipline, and difficult to assess whether a discipline has drawn the line in a just and justified manner. A scientific discipline always determines its own boundaries by reference to its scientific value criteria. In

the case of economics, it seems clear that the discipline has narrowed its methodological scope over the past decades. Perspectives and schools of thought that were once legitimate have been superseded or purged from the field. To be sure, the gradual decay of once prominent ideas is to be expected. Fundamentally, perhaps, many of these changes have in no clear way emerged as a result of critical discourse. For example, Hodgson (2001) contests the received narrative in which Menger won the argument in the *Methodenstreit* with the German historical school and points to this understanding arising later; Paul Samuelson (1966) admitted the defeat of the neoclassical view in the Cambridge Capital Controversy (CCC), yet neoclassical production theory prevailed; and the “formalist revolution” of the post-war era seems to have been due mostly to historical circumstance, not critical discourse (Lawson, 2003; Morgan and Rutherford, 1997). Other changes, such as the rational expectations revolution, appealed to methodological criteria such as microfoundations, but in this case the ideological impetus behind the change cannot be ignored. If the major changes in the history of economic thought are not due to sound exchanges in critical discourse, the current state of economics may not rest on solid, reasoned, foundations. By having narrowed its scientific criteria, the discipline has encapsulated itself in its narrowness. This is quite a puzzle. Only a reform of institutions of critical discourse can remedy the situation; but how can this be done if the bulk of orthodox economists cannot recognize the need for it?

From inside mainstream economics, therefore, it looks as if heterodox economics is simply unscientific. Yet looking at the discipline from the outside, using Longino’s criteria for an ideal discourse, the discipline fails conspicuously in terms of tempered equality. Relevant alternative approaches, even if only as a devil’s advocate that serves as a reminder of the grounds of prevailing beliefs, are not cultivated, nor do they seem to be properly responded to and “taken up” when they do find a venue for outlet. These are obvious dialogical flaws in the discourse of economics.

The foundation of the pyramid

Thus the economics profession fails at meeting the criterion of tempered equality, and, consequently, it fails to meet the other criteria as well. Insofar as pluralism – critical discourse in which new ideas are encouraged – is epistemically effective, the discipline fails at reasonable conditions for facilitating both truth and justice. The other criteria can be assessed in the light of the failure to satisfy this equality

condition. Limitation of tempered equality automatically limits the range of accepted criticism and restricts the scope of values that serve as the engine for change (as well as conservation). Hence, an improvement of the discursive interaction in economics depends on an improvement in the tempered equality of economists. It will not suffice, for example, to employ better methods of metrics so long as the notion of quality prevails.

Even if it is clear, at this point, that the hierarchy of the economics discipline is self-perpetuating, it is not clear how the current paradigmatic forces were instilled in the first place. This is a topic for some residual considerations in the concluding chapter. Thus the two main remaining questions are: why do we not have tempered equality, and what can we do to achieve it? I will consider them in reverse order. The first question invokes the whole history of the discipline and can thus only be addressed in a piecemeal manner.

Tempered equality, although it invokes institutional conditions, is a *virtue*. If the requirement of tempered equality is not met in practice, this could be due to either the virtue being *inoperative* due to institutional shortcomings, or it could simply be *missing*. The lack of appreciation of criticism and other points of view seems to indicate that it is missing. If so, it must be (re-)instated. This is done by means of education, to which I will turn next.

Chapter 6. Pluralism: more than one

[I]t is the privilege and proper condition of a human being, arrived at the maturity of his faculties, to use and interpret experience in his own way. It is for him to find out what part of recorded experience is properly applicable to his own circumstances and character. (Mill, 1998 [1859]: 65)

What we need here is an education that makes people *contrary*, *counter-suggestive* *without* making them incapable of devoting themselves to the elaboration of any single view. How can this aim be achieved? (Feyerabend, 1981a: 164)

Fostering capable pluralists

Recalling Berlin's concepts of negative and positive liberty, we see that they are both concerned with what people are "able to do or be". The negative sense of the term is involved in answering the question "What is the area within which the subject (...) is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?" The positive sense answers the question "What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?" (Berlin, 1969: 121-122).

Martha Nussbaum (2006: 70) states that the capability approach (jointly formulated by herself and Amartya Sen (1999)) is concerned precisely with "what people are actually able to do and to be". Looking at Berlin's division, two questions come to mind. Firstly, is the subject already able to do or be what he is able to do or be, or must she first be enabled? And, secondly, does the subject *know* what she is able to do or be? The capability approach answers that the person is not yet fully developed. She might not yet know what she is able to do; yet this is to a large extent left to the individual to discover herself. Yet her preferences – wishes – may not be what they could have been. For example, "[w]omen and other deprived people frequently exhibit (...) 'adaptive preferences,' formed under unjust background conditions" (Nussbaum, 2006: 73), which tends to validate the status quo. The same might be the case for academics; we have seen that the background conditions for economists are unjust. Preferences and actions of economists can tend to validate the status quo. Sen (1999) states that preferences are changed through development and public discussion; discussion has a transformational potential. Yet, as we saw in the

previous chapter, the venues in the economics discipline are suffering from a lack of tempered equality, so that not all economists are granted equal access to the sphere of discussion. This poses a limit to the transformational, capability-enhancing potential of the economics discipline as it stands. The “collective capability” of public reason (Kelly, 2013) is not achieved.¹⁵⁸

I have suggested that a pluralistic discipline is a tolerant yet actively critical academic culture. The achievement of this is a tough call. How do we form the type of academics *capable* of such activity? The solution seems to lie in the way academics are trained in their field, and in the curricula. Drawing on the capability approach, we could form a conception of “academic capabilities”, i.e. the basic entitlements students need in order to fulfil their academic potential and the central *functionings* they have the *right* to achieve (Nussbaum, 2006: 182). This would give the scope for all academics to flourish, given their methodological inclinations, yet not restrict the potential for criticism.

In Nussbaum’s account of capabilities, we can detect the following components, adapted to the present discourse: Academic capabilities should secure a “basic social minimum” (Nussbaum, 2006: 70). Moreover, capabilities reflect “what [academics]¹⁵⁹ are actually able to do and to be” and they are “informed by an intuitive idea of a life that is worthy of the dignity of the [academic]¹⁶⁰”. Finally, they “are presented as the source of political principles for a liberal pluralistic [scientific community]¹⁶¹” (Nussbaum, 2006: 70).

Thus by developing an understanding of capabilities as they relate to academic practice, we might provide a foundation from which a pluralistic scientific community can arise. Pluralism rests on the nurturing of the human intellect, the dignity of

¹⁵⁸ Therefore, a negative concept of liberty, especially if linked with utilitarianism and a notion of given preferences, is insufficient for our purposes. The capabilities must be enhanced in order for the range of freedom to grow. In a way, this gives a positive underpinning of the negative notion of liberty. There is no one Good to be pursued, nor only one way to proceed in order to pursue the goods; yet one has to reach a certain level of development before the freedom to pursue the goods, in various ways, can be exercised. The quote from Mill above reveals that his understanding is not far removed from this. Indeed, Gray (1998) points out that Mill has an Aristotelian conception of flourishing, although for Mill this flourishing is anchored in the individual – promoting diversity rather than conforming to the norm, or objective virtue. Both Nussbaum and Sen acknowledge the Aristotelian heritage of the capability approach.

¹⁵⁹ The original reads “people”.

¹⁶⁰ The original reads “human being”.

¹⁶¹ The original reads “society”.

academics as persons and justice for academics in the academy; academics should flourish and realize their full potential as truth-seeking scientists. Moreover, by asserting capabilities as the fundamental academic values, we do not *a priori* exclude any methodological approach. Yet at this point we also see the limits of the analogy. As noted above, methodological pluralism has an inherent end which political pluralism does not – the pursuit of truth. However, the fostering of critical academics contains the potential of overcoming this problem as it centres on individual character development rather than mere negative tolerance of various views.

The immediate merit of this approach is apparent: It seems to locate the key to establishing a pluralist community in the way academics are brought up, primarily to undergraduate education.

The idea of a university

We all suppose that what we know is not even capable of being otherwise; of things capable of being otherwise we do not know, when they have passed outside our observation, whether they exist or not. (*Nic. Ethics*: ca. 1139b20)

We have seen that the value system of economics is suffering from a bias: the discipline is failing on criteria for sound discourse by excluding approaches in an *unjustifiable* manner. To change it, we need to replace the weakest link in the value chain of the profession: the education of economists. The above quote from Aristotle shows something important in this regard, namely, that we cannot tell whether things that we have not observed or experienced exist or not. We can be blissfully unaware of the existence of such things – for example, values and perspectives, notions of quality – that we have not been exposed to or otherwise encountered, or lack the ability to fully appreciate them.

The purpose of all scientific activity is to attain knowledge. In a world of uncertain knowledge, there is a need to equip scientists with the capability to discern between different claims to truth and accord them their relative merit. This *equipment* is not an inventory, but a frame of mind. Knowledge, and truth, can only be properly acquired by persons of a certain intellectual disposition.

There is a long-standing tradition of looking upon education as a means to develop persons, their ability to make sound judgments and discern truth from

falsehood and right from wrong, as opposed to a more narrow view of education as the mere acquisition of facts and skills – potentially with another end in view than the person itself, i.e. to train the workforce. Whereas on the latter view, the aim might be to make students *fit for employment*, on the former view the aim is to make students *fit for freedom* (Nussbaum, 1997). On the former view, the end of education is the cultivation of the person; on the latter view, education is instrumental to something else – it is the preparation for certain tasks or vocation, ultimately aimed at contributing to economic growth (Collini, 2012; Nussbaum, 2010).

This division dates back to classical antiquity. Nussbaum (1997) refers to Aristophanes' play *The Clouds*, in which he ridicules the “Think-Academy”, a new sort of education, led by Socrates, which corrupts the young by having them doubt the values of society. Aristophanes champions “Old Education”, based on discipline and training in the ways of custom. Nussbaum, however, sides with Socrates. Think-Academy represents liberal education; “an education that is ‘liberal’ in that it liberates the mind from the bondage of habit and custom, producing people who can function with sensitivity and alertness as citizens of the whole world” (Nussbaum, 1997: 8).¹⁶² Socratic education aims at self-examination, at understanding the grounds of one's own preconceptions and the grounds of the views of others, at questioning authority and learning to take reasoned positions (Nussbaum, 1997; 2010).

Nussbaum states that the unexamined life is not worth living. Pluralistic education fosters self-examination:

Socratic education should be pluralistic, that is, concerned with a variety of different norms and traditions. There is no more effective way to wake pupils up than to confront them with difference in an area where they had previously thought their own ways neutral, necessary, and natural. (...). In our complex world, Socratic inquiry mandates pluralism. (Nussbaum, 1997: 32-33, original emphasis)

¹⁶² What does “fit for freedom” mean in this context? Nussbaum bases her idea of *liberalis* on ancient Greek and Roman conceptions. Thus the meaning of liberty here has an affinity with Skinner's (2003) third concept: republican liberty, freedom from arbitrary power. If education aims at making citizens fit for freedom, then this implies that freedom is something that must be realized. Thus it cannot be the negative concept that is involved here; it rather seems to be in line with the positive one. In Newman's account, the opposite of “liberal” is “servile” (Newman, 2008 [1852]: 132) – this seems to suggest a republican conception. Moreover, he states that “[n]ot to know the relative disposition of things is the state of slaves or children” (Newman 2008 [1852]: 138).

As against the danger of anything goes, she states:

There is a widespread fear (...) that critical scrutiny of one's own traditions will automatically entail a form of cultural relativism that holds all ways of life [analogy: schools of thought] to be equally good for human beings (...). But of course this is not what Socratic inquiry implies. Rather, it implies that we should cling to that which we can rationally defend, and be willing to discover that this may or may not be identical with the view we held when we began the inquiry. (...) What is excellent in our own traditions will survive the scrutiny of Socratic argument. (Nussbaum, 1997: 33)

Hence exposure to different perspectives and critical scrutiny of all traditions should be at the core of education, according to Nussbaum.

The idea of liberal education has gained the strongest foothold in the US, represented in the tradition of the liberal arts colleges, in which all students, regardless of their major subject, take common courses in the humanities and the arts. Although, as Nussbaum (2010) observes, this model is under increasing pressure from demands for “economic impact”, it is still a role model. “The economic growth culture”, the threatening contender that seems to be widespread in many European countries, “has a fondness for standardized tests, and an impatience with pedagogy and content that are not easily assessed in this way” (Nussbaum, 2010: 48).

The foremost formulation of the idea of liberal education, I think, is by John Henry Newman – an English cardinal who established a Catholic University in Dublin in the mid 19th century – in a series of lectures published as *The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated* (Newman, 2008 [1852]). A central theme for Newman is the distinction between “mere acquirement” and the “scientific formation of mind”, which juxtaposes the rote learning of facts to the character forming type of education. The distinction is beautifully elucidated by Newman's own prose:

[I]t is not mere application, however exemplary, which introduces the mind to truth, nor the reading many books, nor the getting up many subjects, nor the witnessing many experiments, nor the attending many lectures. All this is short of enough; a man may have done it all, yet be lingering in the vestibule of knowledge:—he may not realize what his mouth utters; he may not see with his mental eye what confronts him; he may have no grasp of things as they are; or at least he may have no power at all of

advancing one step forward of himself, in consequence of what he has already acquired, no power of discriminating between truth and falsehood, of sifting out the grains of truth from the mass, of arranging things according to their real value, and, if I may use the phrase, of building up ideas. Such a power is the result of a scientific formation of mind; it is an acquired faculty of judgment, of clear-sightedness, of sagacity, of wisdom, of philosophical reach of mind, and of intellectual self-possession and repose,—qualities which do not come of mere acquirement. The bodily eye, the organ for apprehending material objects, is provided by nature; the eye of the mind, of which the object is truth, is the work of discipline and habit. (Newman, 2008 [1852]: 180-181)

There is more to education than knowledge, something that is hard to name; Newman suggests that this is “enlargement of the mind” or “illumination”. This enlargement is the purpose of liberal education:

This process of training, by which the intellect, instead of being formed or sacrificed to some particular or accidental purpose, some specific trade or profession, or study or science, is disciplined for its own sake, for the perception of its own proper object, and for its own highest culture, is called Liberal Education. (Newman, 2008 [1852]: 181)

He opposes liberal education to *useful* education, i.e. the job-preparing sort. However, he claims that liberal education will make one more prepared to undertake any particular job than the alternative instruction-based¹⁶³ pedagogy, and is hence ultimately more useful. The former is *philosophical*, whereas the latter is *mechanical*. The conflict is still alive today; Nussbaum (1997; 2010) and Collini (2012) are presenting the same objections to rote learning and the idea of useful, in the sense of economically beneficial, education. The distinction is between education as an end in itself, and as a means for something else, such as the economy or the state.

Newman (2008 [1852]: 130) further states that “the end of a Liberal Education is not mere knowledge, or knowledge considered in its *matter*”. What does this mean? Liberal education builds the character, and as such the content of what is being taught is secondary. Collini (2012) points out that Newman’s conception of liberal education is contentless. “And for that reason, the goals may not seem to entail the teaching of

¹⁶³ In contemporary jargon we may call this “training” (Collini, 2012).

any particular subject-matter” (Collini, 2012: 52). What does this contentless principle imply for the *content* of education? It appears to be in line with the abstract move. However, as Collini states, there seems to be a gap between the means and the end. In Newman’s scheme we still study particulars – say tedious details of Latin grammar or history – and this mode of study is the only way to achieve enlargement of the mind. Thus the aim of Newman’s liberal education appears grand and pompous in contrast with the minute details of studying. Moreover, for practical purposes, the difference between instruction and education is not immediately clear. Yet Collini (2012) points out that it is *one-sidedness* that Newman wants to defeat. This is indeed promising for our purposes with regard to combating monism by educational means.

We observe this, in the first instance as a reminder of the purpose of university education, and by extension economics education. Newman’s lofty prose notwithstanding, his conception of liberal education resonates in more recent discussions of pedagogy and curricula, which are, in a way, the working out of the details and practicalities of the ideal of higher education that he drew up. In other words, Newman gives us exactly the kind of frame that we need.¹⁶⁴ It is for us to fill in the picture.

It is reasonable to assume that economists’ notion of quality is instilled in students in the undergraduate and graduate years. At least, a glance at what is going on here will give us an idea of how economists and their beliefs are shaped. The main questions we will have to address in the following are: How well does the typical economics education serve its ultimate purpose? And how can it be made to serve it better?

The standard economics curriculum

David Colander (2005) has conducted a comprehensive survey of graduate students at seven top-ranking universities in the US with a view to assessing economics education.¹⁶⁵ Among notable findings are that problem solving is perceived as the most important skill; 51% of the respondents hold this to be very important. Tied at second place are skills in empirical research and “excellence in mathematics”, with

¹⁶⁴ Skorupski (2007: 26) links Mill’s view on education and nurturing of the individual to liberal education.

¹⁶⁵ The study follows up on a previous survey by Colander and Klammer (1987), and the partial purpose of the most recent study is to assess the changes of the students’ perception since then.

30% finding both skills very important, and 52% finding them moderately important. Only 11% think that “a broad knowledge of the economics literature” is very important, and 9% of the respondents thought that having thorough knowledge of the economy was very important (Colander, 2005: 180-181).¹⁶⁶

Whereas Colander and Klammer (1987) concluded by criticizing “economics itself – its rigidity of assumptions, its lack of empirical grounding and its failure to bring the models to the data in a serious way” (Colander, 2005: 197), this more recent study applauds the discipline’s move from pure theory towards becoming more empirical. However, Colander is critical of the core content of the graduate programmes, and notes a mismatch between pedagogy and purpose: “If, as the students strongly argued in the interviews, creativity and economic reasoning, not mathematics, is the core of economics, then it seems reasonable that the core courses should focus on creativity and economic reasoning and not technique” (Colander, 2005: 198).

Taking note of this consideration of graduate programmes in the US, we can take a look at the typical undergraduate programmes. In 2010, INET put down two committees that were to research the typical curricula in undergraduate economics degrees in the US and the UK, respectively.

The US committee surveyed the economics major in six leading economics departments: two private universities (Harvard and Princeton), two liberal arts colleges (Amherst and Williams) and two major public universities (UMass Amherst and Berkeley), which are presumably representative of economics degrees in the US. The committee reports that the major in economics is consistent across these institutions, the prototypical programme being the following:

- First year: one- or two-semester principles course, calculus and introductory statistics.
- Second and third years: intermediate microeconomics, macroeconomics, and econometrics. These are often offered in a high-math track, which requires multivariate calculus.

¹⁶⁶ In the first study, the respondents attached a higher relevance to mathematics and an even lower relevance to real-world knowledge, whereas the significance attached to empirical research has increased dramatically. One possible reason for the more positive perception of the subject, Colander (2005: 193) notes, is changes in the composition of people choosing to study economics at the graduate level rather than changes to the subject itself.

- Third and fourth years: three to five electives. A thesis is typically required for an honors degree. (Neilson, 2010: 3)

However, most undergraduate programmes in the US contain “distribution requirements” (this is the liberal education legacy); however, modules in economics and mathematics can fill some of these. None of the surveyed majors required economic history or history of thought. The textbooks are drawn from a small pool. The committee stresses the breadth in the first year as a marked difference from the UK programme, where students are admitted straight into their course of study.

The UK committee surveyed the undergraduate programmes of the 12 universities whose economics departments ranked highest in the Research Assessment Exercise of 2008. Their general conclusion is:

Single-honours economics degrees at the twelve surveyed UK universities share a large number of characteristics. They share a course structure with compulsory micro, macro and quantitative courses in the first two years, and a third year based almost entirely on options; they emphasise the mathematics on the micro side and the policy on the macro side; and they are almost entirely devoid of compulsory qualitative elements. (Wigstrom, 2010: 8)

More specifically, the committee draws up the standard content and progression of the undergraduate degree as follows:

First year:

- Introduction to economics (possibly divided into separate micro and macro courses)
- Introduction to mathematical techniques for economists
- Additional courses (compulsory and optional, depending on university)

Second year:

- Intermediate microeconomics
- Intermediate macroeconomics
- Econometrics (not compulsory at Manchester)
- Additional courses (compulsory and optional, depending on university)

Third year:

- Four to six optional courses, sometimes including an independent research project
- A few universities have compulsory elements (Wigstrom, 2010: 3)

It should be noted that all surveyed universities offer joint-honour degrees, in which economics is combined with one or more other fields although “the general observation indicates that few joint-honour programmes include truly interdisciplinary courses” (Wigstrom, 2010: 2), and that there is some flexibility in the composition of the economics degrees apart from this core.¹⁶⁷

In any case, we detect a similar structure of the core of undergraduate economics degrees in these two countries. The model aims at building a foundation in micro- and macroeconomics and mathematics in the first year, move on to intermediate level micro- and macroeconomics in the second year along with econometrics, and end up with optional modules in the third (and for the US also the fourth) year, where the tools acquired in the first two years are applied. Thus during the first two years the students learn the standard methods and theories of neoclassical economics, as well as mathematics and statistics. The elective economics modules towards the end of the course are largely applications of these techniques rather than offerings of diversity, although students are free to choose some interdisciplinarity. Moreover, the modules are method-centred rather than subject matter-centred. The surveys do not provide details on issues of pedagogy and assessment, but give a clear first indication of content.

This Anglo-American model of economics has been exported to other countries as well. My own training at the University of Bergen, Norway, follows the same structure of courses, based solely on rote learning of neoclassical economics assessed through written exams consisting of mathematical problem sets (apart from the dissertations). Other Norwegian universities follow the same model (Eliassen, Hauge and Rajic, 2015; Eliassen, 2016). French (PEPS-Économie, 2015) and German (Netzwerk Plurale Ökonomik, 2016) degrees similarly display a very high emphasis on technique and neoclassical economics. ISIPE (2016) have surveyed the curricula

¹⁶⁷ Moreover, two of the surveyed universities *require* economic history in the economics degree, five offer it as optional module, and five offer history of economic thought as an optional module.

of 13 countries,¹⁶⁸ in which the same picture of the core emerges: standard microeconomics, macroeconomics, statistics/econometrics and mathematics. Management, law and business form a rather high component, whereas “reflexive” courses such as economic history, history of ideas and ethics form a vanishingly small part of the curricula (Netzwerk Plurale Ökonomik, 2016).¹⁶⁹ It is worth noting that it has not always been this way. The last few decades have seen a narrowing of the economics curricula (Colander and McGoldrick, 2009; ISIPE, 2014), in terms of content as well as pedagogy.¹⁷⁰ Today, we see the shape of a globalized, uniform, profession (Fourcade, 2006).

From this outline it seems plausible that certain scientific standards, or values, are instilled at the start of the training of economists, and there is little exposure to alternative approaches. In the light of our introductory remarks on liberal education, it seems straightforward that a narrow focus on one school of thought and its methods, however useful they may be as *part* of an education, is ill fitted to the formation of a scientific mind. However, since this is not the conventional wisdom among economics educators – if the curricula are anything to go by – I will in the following back this up with reference to pedagogical research on intellectual development.¹⁷¹

There are two general concerns with the inclusion of several approaches in economics education. Firstly, there is the concern that too many alternatives will leave the students bewildered and confused (Siegfried and Meszaros, 1997). And, secondly, there is a potential trade-off between depth and breadth of content; the more ground one tries to cover, the lesser is the understanding of the material (Barone, 1991). Do these objections hold? Certainly, we do not want students to have shallow understandings, much less existential crises. To assess these implications, we need to look at how learning and development takes place in the university, or, in other words, how true academics are born, or bred.

¹⁶⁸ The full results of the survey are as yet not publicly available, so these findings are subject to qualification.

¹⁶⁹ This share of this component is moderately high in Mexico (ISIPE, 2016).

¹⁷⁰ A look at the standard Harvard exam (Collier, 2016) from 1939 reveals a great shift from evaluative political and ethical questions to mathematically and technique based exams today.

¹⁷¹ There is a self-reinforcing mechanism here in that educators who themselves have not benefitted from a liberal education cannot be expected to appreciate its value, and perhaps has no way of doing so. And so an economics training scheme is maintained. However, such conclusions should not be drawn prematurely.

Perry's scheme for intellectual development

William Perry (1970) has conducted a pivotal study of the development of students throughout the college years, the result of which is the appraised Perry scheme for intellectual and ethical development. The study was based on annual interviews of 31 students over the course of 4 years – for the duration of the liberal arts degree.¹⁷² In scheming both intellectual and ethical development, Perry links the development of thinking to the development of the person's values and character. This is no mere coincidence; the term “ethical” is derived from the Greek *ethos*, which means “character”. The good person has built up dispositions to act well, ethically.¹⁷³ And forming the *intellectual character* is the essence of education. This twofold *ethos* is consonant with the demand for pluralism, which has both an epistemological and a moral origin; the scheme is therefore immediately relevant to our purposes.

The main line of development of the student starts with a black-and-white view of the world and absolute truths, along with a strong belief and trust in authority. After a while the student starts appreciating different points of view and the contextual and uncertain nature of knowledge, before (potentially) entering the higher levels of development, in which she is able to evaluate the different positions and choose to commit herself to certain perspectives. This marks “[t]he progression (...) from thinking to meta-thinking, from man as knower to man as critic of his own thought” (Perry, 1970: 71).

The scheme consists of nine stages, which are subdivided into three main phases. Positions 1-3 represent the “Modifying of Dualism”; Positions 4-6 the “Realizing of Relativism”; and 7-9 the “Evolving of Commitments” (Perry, 1970: 58). The transitions between the main phases are the most challenging, and it is at these points in particular that educators can be of aid to the students. It is important to facilitate these transitions because otherwise the development can be delayed and even halted for a range of reasons. Some will seek *retreat* in a dualistic mindset of right and wrong; more yet will *escape* commitment to anything but a firm belief in relativism; many will have their development delayed due to exploration or hesitation.

¹⁷² It is a rather old study, from the time when the idea of liberal education seemed to have triumphed in the US. With the (alleged) setback of liberal education over the last decades in the US – in economics programmes (Colander and McGoldrick, 2009), as well as in academia generally (Nussbaum, 2010), it is still an important study. In the European context it might even bring some fresh perspectives.

¹⁷³ There has lately been a discussion on the ethics, and lack thereof, of economics and economists, spearheaded by DeMartino (2010), which this discussion might bear on.

In detail, the 9 stages of Perry's scheme are as follows:

Position 1: The student sees the world in polar terms of we-right-good vs. other-wrong-bad. Right Answers for everything exist in the Absolute, known to Authority whose role is to mediate (teach) them. Knowledge and goodness are perceived as quantitative accretions of discrete rightnesses to be collected by hard work and obedience (paradigm: a spelling test).

Position 2: The student perceives diversity of opinion, and uncertainty, and accounts for them as unwarranted confusion in poorly qualified Authorities or as mere exercises set by Authority "so we can learn to find The Answer for ourselves."

Position 3: The student accepts diversity and uncertainty as legitimate but still *temporary* in areas where Authority "hasn't found The Answer yet." He supposes Authority grades him in these areas on "good expression" but remains puzzled as to standards.

Position 4: (a) The student perceives legitimate uncertainty (and therefore diversity of opinion) to be extensive and raises it to the status of an unstructured epistemological realm of its own in which "anyone has a right to his own opinion," a realm which he sets over against Authority's realm where right-wrong still prevails, or (b) the student discovers qualitative contextual relativistic reasoning as a special case of "what They want" within Authority's realm.

Position 5: The student perceives all knowledge and values (including authority's) as contextual and relativistic and subordinates dualistic right-wrong functions to the status of a special case, in context.

Position 6: The student apprehends the necessity of orienting himself in a relativistic world through some form of personal Commitment (as distinct from unquestioned or unconsidered commitment to simple belief in certainty).

Position 7: The student makes an initial Commitment in some area.

Position 8: The student experiences the implications of Commitment, and explores the subjective and stylistic issues of responsibility.

Position 9: The student experiences the affirmation of identity among multiple responsibilities and realizes Commitment as an ongoing, unfolding activity through which he expresses his life style. (Perry, 1970: 9-10)

The student needs courage to make the transitions to the higher levels, in particular when it comes to accepting the multiplicity and relativity of beliefs, and to making commitments under conditions of uncertain knowledge – in order not to retreat into

the dualism of right-wrong or to seek shelter from commitment in relativism. An example of what a teacher can do to facilitate transitions is asking the students to read competing views and assess the nature and meaning of the conflict. In this way, she can help them to “go beyond simple diversity into the disciplines of relativity of thought through which specific instances of diversity can be productively exploited” (Perry, 1970: 35).

Support from the curriculum and the diverging views of peers also help:

Authority-oriented structure is first modified and loosened by a series of accommodations necessitated by its assimilation of the pluralism of both peer group and curriculum. These modifications then allow of the perception that Authority, as represented by the most respected elements of the faculty, is itself functioning relativistically and urging the students to do the same. (Perry, 1970: 61)

Notably in this quotation, we see that the description is assuming a pluralism of curriculum, and that the teachers are encouraging the students to appreciate different points of view. This seems to have been educational commonplace at the time of Perry’s writing and probably still is in many areas. Today, however, there is no pluralism of curriculum in economics, which presumably also pressures the peer group towards homogenization. We have seen how the monistic hierarchical system in the economics profession is based on institutionalized authority, which economists have a firm confidence in (Fourcade et al., 2015). The monism of economics education seems to play a large role in this, since “it is the impact of *pluralism* that will later drive home this opening wedge, weakening as it does so Authority’s mediational role, and finally throwing in question the concept of the Absolute itself” (Perry, 1970: 68). So when Perry (1970: 35) stated that only small and carefully guarded departments could avoid diversity, he might have underestimated the sociological dynamics at work within disciplines. The authority-oriented structure is not gradually loosened, as Perry presupposes, but seems to be firmly maintained at all levels of economics. Or, perhaps, after initial inculcation, the illusion of freedom is granted so that the subjects voluntarily (yet unfreely) maintain the established order. The presupposition of the encouragement of students to “function relativistically” might appear as a joke. In the light of Perry’s scheme, typical economics curricula could hardly seem worse fit for intellectual (and ethical) development.

We have previously defined orthodoxy *as not needing to think*. Perry's understanding of the "anti-intellectual" fits the same mould: "the anti-intellectual, be he in or out of college, is definable not as 'against thinking,' but against thinking about one particular thing: thought. Most particularly his *own* thought" (Perry, 1970: 39). This resonates with Nussbaum's call for Socratic self-examination as the mode and purpose of education. The aim is liberal education – to be able to arrive at one's own conclusions of right and wrong, true and false. This is liberation from authority, and the attainment of true freedom to think for oneself.

In contrast, the liberally educated man (...) is one who has learned to think about even his own thoughts, to examine the way he orders his data and the assumptions he is making, and to compare these with other thoughts that other men might have. (...) If he has gone the whole way (...) he has realized that he thinks this way not because his teacher asks him to but because this is how the world "really is". (Perry, 1970: 39-40)

Perry's thinking echoes that of Newman a century earlier. They share the view of liberal education as a character-transforming process, in which one learns to acknowledge the relative merits of different viewpoints and the relative importance of various particulars, and to make reasoned judgments of true and false – and right and wrong – in a world of uncertainty and multiplicity.

Perry (1970: 4-5) observed a general trend in the first half of the 20th century towards examinations in multiple frames,¹⁷⁴ and remarks that the monistic teaching that was typical half a century before their study would not have been able to foster such intellectual development (Perry, 1970: 215). Not only, then, in this view, is a monistic curriculum adverse to the intellectual development of students; it is a reversal of the changes that had taken place within pedagogy up until then. Nussbaum (2010) and Collini (2012) note this tendency towards reversal of the ideals of liberal education in a modern university sector under commercial pressure.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ In economics, multiple frame examinations are evident (e.g.) in the 1939 Harvard exam (Collier, 2016).

¹⁷⁵ This wider institutional context is conducive to the typical economics education and might hold the key to overcoming the problems we perceive. This requires an analysis of the influence of neoliberalism on the higher education sector, but that is a grand topic that must be dealt with elsewhere.

How many is pluralism?

Is there a good explanation and justification of this perceived reversal? We need to revisit the objections to a pluralistic education we raised earlier. Does it lead to confusion, on the one hand, and lack of depth on the other? The implications of the discussion above are relatively straightforward what regards the former:

Modern pluralistic education, with all its pros and cons on every subject, is criticized for not teaching commitment, indeed for leading students away from it. What we have been saying from our understanding of our records is that: (1) without a clear view of pluralism, commitment as we define it is impossible; and (2) commitment can be provided for and given recognition, but it can never be brought about or forced. (Perry, 1970: 37)

The counterargument Perry refers to is the same that Nussbaum (1997: 33) cited earlier in this chapter. His response is also equivalent: only after critical examination of relevant possibilities, each with their relative merits, can we know what we can commit to. In other words, to be a properly committed economist – be it orthodox or heterodox – one needs to go through a proper realization of the multiplicity and relativity of knowledge, in a form of Socratic journey. It is hard to see how the current standard economics curriculum allows for this to happen. This affects heterodox as well as orthodox economists.¹⁷⁶ What is going on, is mere imitation of authority – or, as may be the case for some heterodox economists, fierce opposition to authority, simply grasping for the opposing view. Intellectual development does not result from such training.

When we say that the monistic training of mainstream economics falls short of our educational standards, what do we uphold as the alternative? If *one* is not enough, how many do we need? How many is pluralism? If there are, say, twelve substantially different schools within economics, do we need to incorporate them all in the curriculum (Negru, 2010)?

¹⁷⁶ To the extent that heterodox economists grow out of mainstream institutions, they might be motivated by opposition to the dominant authority, and not as a committed choice on the basis of an evaluation of competing alternatives. The possibility that heterodox economists are not as educated as one might like to think, is a thought worthy of entertaining. Perhaps this is only a natural consequence of the core-periphery power relation. At any rate, the quote above explains that we cannot have true commitment without pluralism.

Barone (1991: 19) explains the fear that increasing the breadth of content will reduce the depth and understanding of the topics taught: “To the extent that the total number of economics requirements cannot be expanded and the length of courses is fixed, there is a potential trade-off here.” This is a commonly heard justification for the exclusion of history of economic thought, economic history, economic sociology and heterodox approaches from the curricula: one simply has to devote enough time to learn the core of neoclassical or mainstream theory and method.

Yet Newman repeatedly makes the point that education is not about acquiring a myriad of facts, as this amounts to superficial acquaintance and not proper knowledge. True education lies in the formation of a reflective, philosophical attitude towards all matter. In fact, for him, the particular content seems to be almost unimportant. The tenor here is in line with our abstract, or contentless, justification of pluralism. What does this mean for the practical implementation of pluralism in education – and, in the next instance, for economics curricula in particular?

Barone (1991) evaluates a reform of the economics curriculum at Dickinson College that saw the inclusion of history of thought and economic history, along with the introduction of a compulsory module in “contending economic perspectives” that centres on heterodox theories and methodology using a comparative approach. He notes that the changes, involving less time spent on neoclassical economics, led to no observable decline in the students’ grasp of neoclassical economics. Barone analyses the changes in students from the reform in light of Perry’s scheme:

Our students, as a result of heterodox integration, are showing all the signs that Perry’s students exhibited as they moved from dualistic to relativistic and critical forms of thinking. The reasons for these developmental shifts are, of course, obvious. The changeover from a single perspective economics curriculum to one that emphasizes contending perspectives creates an educational environment much more conducive to a student’s intellectual and moral development. (Barone, 1991: 22)

Barone (1991: 19) suggests that “the loss in time spent directly studying neoclassical economics may be offset by the enhanced understanding that comes from comparison”, and he believes that heterodox economics can be integrated in a manner that “minimizes if not eliminates any loss of depth within the mainstream”. Nelson (1999) goes further than Barone in dismissing the trade-off between content and

critical thinking as illusory – a unicorn’s horn. “The steps that facilitate critical thinking also facilitate content acquisition” (Nelson, 1999: 180). Other modes of learning, such as group work and discussion, are demonstrably more efficient for the retention of information than lecturing is. Critical thinking skills make it easier to acquire and retain complex content, due to enhanced ability as well as the fact that it involves more enthusiasm!

This is not to say that teaching for critical thinking is problem free, but it is less problematic than ignoring it. Just as a doctor has to risk harming the patient, the teacher risks harming the student: “if we do not teach for sophistication, then we harm all of the students, and if we do, then we might occasionally cause more stress than we intended” (Nelson, 1999: 177). Some resistance and confusion are unavoidable ingredients in learning and in the development of the faculty of thought. Without some friction of the mind, there can be no learning. The growth into appreciating a new perspective requires an adjustment of the mind; to form curricula and syllabi on the notion that confusion is bad, is to try to avoid the nature of learning, which can hardly be taken to be the aim of any serious curriculum.

Nelson (1999) observes that some students are able to discern advantages and disadvantages of various frameworks, and to move to the higher levels of development, acknowledging multiplicity and making personal commitments. He also explains the significance of this in modern society. Moreover, epistemic uncertainty is the starting point for his pedagogical justification. He uses the big bang model as an example. It is known to be false as a whole, yet it generates accurate insights, and it is better than the alternatives. However, in order to appreciate this, the model must be contrasted with alternatives or earlier beliefs. Otherwise the students might be perplexed when they realize that the big bang theory also has its faults – if it is the sole theory taught as the Truth at the highest level of education.

This bears on economics. The teaching of solely neoclassical economics in the training of economists (where this takes place) therefore fuels two problems. Firstly, it does not stimulate questioning of the models, so the students might come to simply accept them. This acceptance does not have to be straightforward. One might attempt to question them, but due to the lack of alternatives settle with some parroted excuse of the models as useful simplifications and perhaps a necessary evil. The other possibility, for those who refuse to believe in the merit of neoclassical economics, is ending up in perennial denial of the approach, not willing to concede any merit to it

whatsoever. In this way, a lot of the practice of orthodox economists, and the infertile hard-headedness of some heterodox economists, can be explained by the same lack of exposure to alternatives (as a minimum) and training aimed at developing critical thinking (more broadly). None of them are provided with the means to make the transitions to the higher states of intellectual development.

Let us return to the question of how many approaches we should include: where do we stop? The literary scholar Wayne Booth (1986) addresses this in his discussion of “pluralism in the classroom”. Booth starts by noting the inherent tendency to monism of all thinking beings, and thereby of teachers. Moreover, he points out the restrictions on time that the classroom necessarily sets, and that there is a limitation to how much contesting information we can discern between and seek to integrate at the same time. Booth states:

Our students’ minds, like our own, have only so much room for cognitive dissonances. What we might call “conviction space” is limited; I can’t entertain very many dissonant beliefs at once. Yet the pluralist’s world is a great buzzing, blooming confusion of rivals who seem to shout “No, that’s not the way to do it, that’s not the way to go at all.” No wonder we generally settle for open or disguised monisms. (Booth, 1986: 470)

How can we overcome this cognitive limitation?

I try not to teach directly any one systematic encounter with pluralist theory – not, at least, until students are far advanced. Instead I use an unsystematic procedure that might be called “adding monisms,” building a plurality of perspectives (at least two but not many more), hoping to lead students to discover for themselves a radical need to replace their intuitive relativism or dogmatic monism with a considered pluralism. (Booth, 1986: 472-473)

In fact, Booth notes that many students seem to be “dogmatic relativists”, which is precisely the escape route offered in Perry’s scheme, where one avoids making commitment to anything but relativism. The aim, however, is a “considered pluralism”, which sounds very much like making personal commitments in a world of contextual relativity (stage 6 and beyond in Perry’s scheme). The ultimate purpose of Booth’s pedagogy is to “open up lives to life’s pluralities” (Booth, 1986: 479).

Booth delivers some concluding principles for teaching pluralism in practice. The first is the most elucidating:

I must try to ensure that every student has learned to respect the powers, and to practice the powers, of *at least two* contrasting ways of looking at or grasping whatever work we are studying. Teaching my own one favourite view or mode of thought will never be enough. One alone will always risk crippling by deep-freezing. The better we teach it the more dangerous it becomes. *Only when a second possibility comes alive before us, or within us, are we driven beyond imitation into thought.* (Booth, 1986: 476, my emphasis)

Moreover, he restricts the number of approaches; two or three in a particular course might be sufficient; a real confrontation must be possible, too many approaches leads to porridge instead of pluralism. “Moving down the college years to the freshmen, the principle requires that we teach them not just one philosophical work but at least two, not just one history but at least two, not just one view of rhetoric but at least two” (Booth, 1986: 477). The approaches are studied monistically in turn, but the exposure to alternatives in itself facilitates the appreciation that they (e.g. William James and Plato) make complete sense – on their own terms. The teacher has a responsibility to teach at least one position that is contrary to her own (Booth, 1986: 478).

However, Booth offers a word of caution: “whenever pluralism as a project, as a learning, risks suggesting a ‘coverage’ that outclasses what is covered, throw it away” (Booth, 1986: 475). If we aim at full cover, it is implied that anything that is not covered, does not exist. Pluralism becomes “privative”. This is consonant with a point I have previously made. The aim of pluralism is not to legislate for allocation of space to each existing school of thought in economics within curricula, departmental positions, etc. (according to some formula that would be impossible to determine), but rather to provide for the liberty of every individual economist to flourish as a truth-pursuing academic irrespective of academic beliefs. No single theory or school can be guaranteed a place.

If we draw on Booth in answering the question “How many is pluralism?” the answer is: *at least two*! Beyond that pluralism is not a number, but rather a practice, or an attitude. In other words, the main difference lies between *one* and *more than*

one.¹⁷⁷ To be able to overcome a monistic mindset, to even realize that one has been entrenched in one way of viewing the world, one has to be exposed to at least one alternative – to see that there is more than one way of approaching a given subject matter.

The assertion of the principle of *more than one* does, however, raise questions of how different the incorporated perspectives should be (Denis, 2009). It would not seem sufficient from a pluralist perspective to draw on minor differences within mainstream economics, even if such attempts would have some merit. Pluralism invokes different methodological points of departure as well as an understanding of the historical and contextual contingency of theories and the perennial role of controversy on fundamentals.

History of economic thought at Northampton University

A recent example of a thorough effort of introducing pluralism in the economics curriculum is provided by Deane, Van Waeyneberge and Maxwell (forthcoming)¹⁷⁸, based on Deane's revamp of the history of economic thought module at Northampton University. The effort had its rationale in pedagogy as well as content, introducing a novel “flipped classroom” pedagogical approach aiming at student-centred learning, in which students should explore a range of economic theories by means of comparing and contrasting. The students were assessed on a group poster presentation on one selected economist as well as an individual essay reflecting on the historical development of the discipline. Group meetings with the tutor were substituted for lectures over a substantial part of the module. The results of the evaluation, which consisted of a survey along with semi-structured interviews of eight students, are in line in what we would expect from Perry's scheme of intellectual development.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Negru (2010) similarly identifies the requirement of pluralism in pedagogy to be *more than one* and that this helps students acknowledge the validity of different viewpoints, yet she claims that we need to go beyond this in order to create pluralist, critical and reflexive, economists. Perhaps the ethos of scholars can never be guaranteed, regardless of their educational background. However, Negru (2010) does not offer any further pedagogical recommendations. I contend that firmly upholding the principle of *more than one* in a context of liberal education with a view to intellectual development is a sufficient guiding principle. We can never guarantee the practice of scholars but only establish a conducive environment; scholars will always have the freedom to act as they will.

¹⁷⁸ I am grateful to Kevin Deane for granting me access to this paper.

¹⁷⁹ It should be noted here that Deane et al. (forthcoming) do not engage with any of the theorists invoked in this chapter; yet there is a striking analogy between their intentions and

Comparison of different theoretical perspectives, combined with the student-centred approach calling for them to actively reflect on these differences, seems to have been particularly successful. Students reported some initial confusion, but in general seem to have benefitted from the teaching strategy as the module went on, particularly in coming to appreciate the relative validity of competing perspectives and the place of argument in economics, as opposed to rote application of a single correct view.

Prior to taking Deane's module, 70 per cent of the student respondents had been unaware that they had previously been taught mainly neoclassical economics. Quotations from the interviewees indicate a movement towards the middle stages of intellectual development. For example, Student 04 states: "Overall, I think it was a really positive thing that Kevin introduced that and made my head explode, I guess, but *it was really positive as now I have a broader view of economics as a whole*" (Deane et al., forthcoming¹⁸⁰). Similarly, Student 08 reports that "when you see all the other methods it was kind of like *an eye-opening experience*" (Deane et al., forthcoming). Students acknowledged the scope and need for taking a reasoned position within a range of legitimate options. Student 07 reports: "For me it was a bit of a *revelation* because I thought, hang on, the economics I've been taught for the last year and a half turns out to not be the economics – it's not science, *it's more sort of an argument rather than a direct [exact] science*" (Deane et al., forthcoming). And Student 04 comments: "At first it was hard to understand, but after a while it became easy. (...) *[Y]ou're able to criticise it and say whether the assumptions are actually correct*" (Deane et al., forthcoming). Indeed, the response indicates that the approach of Deane seems quite successful in achieving the aim of pluralist teaching as presented in this chapter.

The results of the evaluation clearly point to challenges in terms of some students starting to view neoclassical economics as false and feeling cheated by the content of the main bulk of their course; this indicates failure to acknowledge the contextual validity of the neoclassical approach. To some extent this reflects that the students are on a certain step on the ladder of intellectual development, yet it points to a problem that instructors should be aware of; students tend to believe in the authority

results, on the one hand, and the perspective on intellectual development here put forward, on the other.

¹⁸⁰ All emphases in the quotations from this source are original.

of instructors, regardless of the course content they present. The results also show that pluralist reform of a single module raises important questions of integration with a curriculum that is otherwise largely neoclassical,¹⁸¹ as students struggled with making the fruits reaped from this course bear on other subject areas. The authors moreover raise the question of employability. Whereas one student anticipates that the critical thinking skills acquired will be valuable in professional life, in line with the intention of the module, another raises the concern that employers will not see the value of knowledge on defunct economists such as Marx.

Critical thinking

Above, we slipped in the term “critical thinking”. This is a central term that needs further consideration. We have seen Newman speaking of “enlargement of the mind” as the purpose of liberal education. John Dewey (1910) talked of “reflective thinking” in a similar vein.¹⁸² Perry (1970) uses the term “independent thinking” (Perry, 1970); and the buzzword nowadays is “critical thinking”. I believe all of these *thinkings* point to the same thing. What is involved is the development of a certain disposition for making one’s own judgment in intellectual matters, as reflected in Thoma’s (1993: 128) definition of critical thinking: “Genuine critical thinking requires the recognition of the evolutionary nature of knowledge and the ability and responsibility of individuals to make independent intellectual choices.”

Nevertheless, there are two general, and different, views on what critical thinking entails. The first depicts it as a set of skills, the second rather as an intellectual capability, a mode of the mind. Feiner and Roberts (1995) subscribe to the former. They contrast critical thinking with lower-order, more mechanical, cognitive skills:

[B]y critical thinking we mean the exercise of higher-order cognitive skills: rather than ‘define,’ ‘list,’ and ‘solve,’ critical thinking tasks include ‘interpret,’ ‘criticize,’

¹⁸¹ Skidelsky (2010) seeks to outline a genuinely pluralist curriculum for the economics undergraduate degree.

¹⁸² “Reflective thinking, in short, means judgment suspended during further inquiry; and suspense is likely to be somewhat painful. As we shall see later, the most important factor in the training of good mental habits consists in acquiring the attitude of suspended conclusion, and in mastering the various methods of searching for new materials to corroborate or to refute the first suggestions that occur. To maintain the state of doubt and to carry on systematic and protracted inquiry – these are the essentials of thinking” (Dewey, 1910: 13).

and ‘evaluate.’ The former tasks demand only knowledge and application of logic; the latter, however, virtually require that students confront competing theories, and confront them as theories rather than immediate appropriations of reality. (Feiner and Roberts, 1995: 367)

In other words, this is a view of critical thinking as a form of or part of a toolbox that one can use when needed. However, the curricular implications are similar to those of a broader understanding, requiring “exposure to alternatives” (Feiner and Roberts, 1995: 369). The problem with this take on critical thinking is that it is not clear what the *purpose* of this intellectual versatility is. In Perry’s scheme, such intellectual versatility occurs at the higher middle phases – before the evolving of commitment. In other words, it is not clear if the skills are meant to serve some “useful” purpose external to the person itself, or whether the purpose is the fostering of the person as a critical citizen. Critical thinking in the narrow sense is thus a step on the way, but it does not aim at the highest levels of intellectual and ethical development, i.e. the evolving of commitment.

The broader view of critical thinking is more explicitly in accordance with Newman’s as well as Perry’s thought, and with that of Richard Paul, a pioneer in the literature on critical thinking. Critical thinking in the broad sense is “a mode of mental integration, as a synthesized complex of dispositions, values, and skills necessary to becoming a fair-minded critical person” (Paul, 1999: 129). This integrated view of a critically thinking person refers to the virtues of the researcher.

The aim of education, according to Paul (1999: 128), should be to reach the following intellectual virtues:

- *Intellectual courage*: to acknowledge that ideas considered dangerous or absurd can have a rational grounding and that what we believe can be false.
- *Intellectual empathy*: to put oneself in place of others and realize that our own ideas are based on our immediate perceptions and thought we are accustomed to.
- *Intellectual good faith (integrity)*: to hold oneself to the same standards as others, in evaluating work and thought.

- *Intellectual perseverance*: to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties and the irrational opposition of others.
- *Faith in reason*: to believe in the rationality and ability to think and arrive at sensible conclusion, of oneself and others.
- *Fair-mindedness*: be willing to treat all viewpoints alike.

Unfortunately, in Paul's (1999: 129) view, even the best students are currently miseducated and consequently unable to properly apprehend their prejudices and beliefs and to exercise their intellectual faculties. The intellectual virtues must be taught for; these are precisely what teaching should aim at. Monistic teaching, however, has adverse effects:

Superficially absorbed content, the inevitable byproduct of extensive but shallow coverage, inevitably leads to intellectual arrogance. Such learning discourages intellectual perseverance and confidence in reason. It prevents the recognition of intellectual bad faith. It provides no foundation for intellectual empathy, nor for an intellectual sense of fair play. By taking and giving back masses of detail, students come to believe that they know a lot about each subject – whether they understand or not. By practicing applying rules and formulas to familiar tasks, they come to feel that getting the answer should always be easy – if you don't know how to do something, don't try to figure it out, ask. By hearing and reading only one perspective, they come to think that perspective has a monopoly on truth – any other view must be completely wrong. (Paul, 1999: 129, my emphasis)

We have indicated that there is a prevailing arrogance in the discipline, which we have tried to link to ignorance of alternatives, and this is supported by the theories of Paul and other educators. Without alternatives there is, moreover, a danger of remaining in Perry's dualism.

There is a question of what Paul means by "extensive" coverage, since the problem perceived in economics is not that the curriculum is too wide, but too narrow. In any case, this links in well with Booth's statement of pluralism as *at least two* – but not too many. "Shallow", however, is a readily applicable descriptor. To the extent that written exams, based on problem-solving, are predominant, this is fully in line with this shallowness, encouraging pretending to know rather than knowing.

Most teaching and most texts are (...) epistemologically unrealistic and hence foster intellectual arrogance in students, particularly in those with retentive memories who can repeat back what they have heard or read. *Pretending* to know is encouraged. Much standardized testing validates this pretense. (Paul, 1999: 130)

In other words, monistic learning – in particular in combination with written mathematical exams – fuels ignorance and undue confidence among students. The mastering of mathematical techniques thus enters as a key criterion already at the start of the education, and in the absence of other means of assessment, it remains the criterion for being a successful economist all the way through the degree system, and is manifested as the hallmark of a quality economist, championed by the journal system.¹⁸³ Thus Paul's assessment of these tendencies in teaching supports our interpretation of how the hierarchy of the discipline is shaped. Moreover, it reinforces the general direction of our discussion – in linking critical thinking with liberal education and the capabilities and the *ethos* of the student or academic: "Our basic ways of knowing are inseparable from our basic ways of being. How we think reflects who we are" (Paul, 1999: 130).

In addition to this, Paul gives a useful reminder of the universality involved in pluralism, in aiming at justice for all academics:

We must also be motivated by an *intellectual sense of justice*. We must recognize an intellectual *responsibility* to be fair to views we oppose. We must be *obliged* to hear them in their strongest form to ensure that we do not condemn them out of our own ignorance or bias. (Paul, 1999: 132)

In fact, it seems we have gone full circle; Paul's argument is an echo of Mill's argument for pluralism. Yet now we are able to clearly link it to intellectual development, to the character of the truth-pursuing academic.

It is, admittedly, no easy task to uphold these virtues and values as heterodox economists, swimming against the perennial current; but if we do not manage it, we lose the universality of pluralism. Paul (1999: 133) notes that personal resentment

¹⁸³ There are, of course, variations in content and pedagogy. However, for the UK, an employability report (Pomorina, 2012) points to the lack of critical thinking skills and ability to apply theory to real world among UK economics graduates.

stemming from the perceived wrongdoing by others to you places a strong demand on your intellectual integrity when reasoning to reach conclusions.

Paul (1999) is, however, rather vague when it comes to the implications for teaching. He states the need for a shift towards depth rather than coverage, towards foundational ideas, analysis “and on intellectual experiences that develop and deepen the most basic intellectual skills, abilities, concepts, and virtues” (Paul, 1999: 129) – without mentioning what these experiences may be.

The ethos and virtues are in line with the capability approach. Martha Nussbaum (2006: 76) has devised a ten-point list of threshold capabilities we should aim at. Can we enrich Paul’s virtues by adapting Nussbaum’s list of capabilities to the academic realm? What would the list entail? A glimpse of some of the components of the list, where I have substituted some terms, gives a few indications.

For example, point 4 on the list is *Senses, imagination and thought*. Nussbaum elaborates:

Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think and reason – and to do these things in a ‘truly [academic]¹⁸⁴’ way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education. (...) Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with (...) producing [theories and written work]¹⁸⁵ of one’s own choice. (Nussbaum, 2006: 76)

We can suggest, then, that one central academic capability is to be able to use one’s senses, imagination and thought freely in academic work, prepared by a broad-minded and critical education. This should, in the first instance, preclude homogenization and standardization of curricula. Moreover, it calls for the removal of barriers in the shape of arbitrary formalistic criteria for journal articles and theories.

Point 7 on the list is *Affiliation* (Nussbaum, 2006: 77). The keywords here are self-respect, non-humiliation, non-discrimination, social interaction, empathy and respect for others. Hence we can suggest that academic capabilities should entail a preservation of dignity and identity and mutual toleration between practitioners. Yet another point, 10, *Control over one’s environment*, seems to reinforce this, as it entails “being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering

¹⁸⁴ The original reads “human”.

¹⁸⁵ The original reads “works and events”.

into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers” (Nussbaum, 2006: 78).

Thus, *prima facie*, an adaptation of Nussbaum’s capabilities fits the justice aspect of pluralism well – particularly in ensuring the toleration of different approaches, but also in nurturing different methodological inclinations. Whereas Paul exhibits the character virtues involved, Nussbaum appeals to aspects of dignity and the interpersonal circumstances that are crucial in a sound and ethical scholarly community.

Applying Sen’s (1999) approach to undergraduate (liberal) education, Garnett (2009a) stresses Sen’s “removal of unfreedoms”, and reaches the conclusions that:

- (1) Liberal education consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency as autonomous thinkers.
- (2) Expansion of academic freedom is viewed, in this approach, as both the primary end and principal means of liberal education. (Garnett, 2009a: 441)

The key is to develop the proper academic ethos from the outset, and this means that students should be granted certain rights and freedoms, and also be expected to fulfil certain obligations. Among the factors Garnett (2009a: 442) mentions are 1) the right to have their work evaluated without prejudice, 2) the ability to question premises without intimidation or ridicule, 3) the freedom to “explore their major subject in an intellectually open curriculum that introduces them to contending disciplinary perspectives” and 4) learning how to think critically, i.e. acknowledge the uncertainty of knowledge and form their own reasoned conclusions based on competing views.

What does this demand of the teacher? Garnett quotes from the statement of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP, 1915):

The university teacher (...) while he is under no obligation to hide his own opinion under a mountain of equivocal verbiage (...) should cause his students to become familiar with the best published expressions of the great historic types of doctrine upon the questions at issue (...) (including) the divergent opinions of other investigators. (Garnett, 2009a: 440)

This again is clearly in line with Mill's (1998 [1859]) emphatic call for the best representation of opposing ideas. We are very close to the implementation of pluralism I have been seeking. Can it be summed up in a list of rights or capabilities/functionings as sketched above?

Amartya Sen (2004) is sceptical of lists of capabilities as such foreclosure of the outcomes of processes under freedom is nobody's business. I have no firm opinion on this matter, but I do think that devising a specific list serves no further purpose here. Garnett (2009a)¹⁸⁶ has, for example, emphasized the academic freedoms and rights of students, by drawing on statements from the AAUP and other associations of higher education, as well as Horowitz' (2002) *Academic Bill of Rights*, and he does right in pointing to them. Such lists are useful as correctives and benchmarks, but cannot themselves induce solutions to the institutional problems the discipline is faced with given the level of abstraction at which this thesis is moving.

For the purposes of curricular reform, I therefore agree with Garnett (2009b: 66) that such efforts have to be bottom-up and adapted to local institutions and the subject-knowledge of academic staff (apart from a general motto of diversity – *more than one*). However, as we have previously analysed the professional hierarchy in the UK, it is worthwhile looking at what scope the system gives for various approaches to economics in the educational programmes.

Back to pluralism

In the 1990s, the British government started to “audit” the content of the degrees in order to ensure the quality in degree-awarding institutions (Freeman, 2010). This led

¹⁸⁶ The discussion in this chapter, although it is conducted independently, has a close affinity with Garnett' views, as he also draws on the work of Perry, Paul, Nussbaum and Sen. The most important difference, I think, is the overall sociological and institutional perspective in which my analysis is situated: my analysis provides the rules of ideal discourse and points to its shortcomings, and liberal education arises as the solution to this institutional oppression. Having undertaken the abstract move, liberal education reform is arrived at as what the calls for pluralism consistently amount to given the institutional mechanisms at work, and ensuring to meet both the moral and the epistemological condition that the calls for pluralism invoke. This takes on a particular importance when we analyse the feasibility of pluralism, which I have not fully done as yet, but to the relevant factors of which I will point in the concluding chapter – thus further emphasizing the importance of the sociological dimension for the prospects of pluralism. Another factor is, as pointed out in the second chapter, Garnett's (2006) unclear utilization of Kuhn's paradigm communities, which I think is at best an unnecessary component of a justification for pluralism. A third factor is that it is not clear to what extent his notion of pluralism and critical thinking can facilitate the highest levels of the Perry scheme, a matter I will return to shortly.

to the development of a Subject Benchmark Statement (SBS), published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), for all bachelor's degrees with honours. For economics, the first SBS was released in 2007 (QAA, 2007), and a revised statement was published in 2015 (QAA, 2015). The review group for the new SBSE¹⁸⁷ had two heterodox members, Daniela Gabor and Neil Lancaster, who worked for the inclusion of some new formulations on critical thinking and contending perspectives, and less emphasis on quantitative methods, with partial success.¹⁸⁸ QAA (2015: 4) sum up the changes as being “more explicit in acknowledging the importance of context in analysing economic phenomena and the importance of developing a critical approach. It reasserts the need for students to develop skills in rigorous data analysis and communication”.¹⁸⁹ As institutions can have the right to award degrees withdrawn if they do not meet the requirements in the SBS, the statement is of great importance to the prospects for heterodox economics on the curriculum and pluralism generally considered. There is some disagreement among heterodox economists and pluralists as to how far the SBSE allows for heterodoxy and pluralism.

Alan Freeman (2008; 2009; 2010) has done a considerable amount of work on the question of benchmarking, partly on behalf of the Association for Heterodox Economics (AHE). The crux of this work is in line with our justification of pluralism and the abstract move.

Freeman (2010) points out that the SBSE sets itself apart from other SBSes in its lack of acknowledgment of diversity within the field; the field is defined by what it agrees on, rather than what is disputed in it. In comparison, for example, politics, geography and even theology emphasise diversity and controversy as defining characteristics in their respective SBSes (Freeman, 2009).

According to Freeman, the lack of diversity is a sign of poor quality. Freeman (2010: 1591-1592) defines “bad economics” as “economics that takes no precaution against the possibility of error”. Freeman wants “assertive pluralism” as the *foundation* of the discipline. One consequence of the lack of diversity and critical thinking is that “in the absence of explicit safeguards, assessors confuse dissent with

¹⁸⁷ Subject Benchmark Statement for Economics

¹⁸⁸ Neil Lancaster has logged some of the process on his blog: <http://neil.lancastle.com/> (accessed: 08.04.16).

¹⁸⁹ More specifically, bullet points on market failure and historical and policy context have been added, and the emphasis on evidence has been increased.

poor quality” (Freeman, 2010: 1598). This we have already established.¹⁹⁰ What does Freeman mean by pluralism in this context? “[P]luralism is not an amalgam of isolated fragments from views that utterly conflict with each other. It is the systematic deployment of controversy as the founding principle of understanding and action” (Freeman, 2010: 1606).

Freeman (2010: 1604) guards against the view that pluralism is some kind of muddled relativism: “Pluralism is not a substitute for standard: it *is* a standard”. In Freeman’s (2010: 1600) words, we need “an external standard of quality”, cf. our previous discussion of Feyerabend’s external standard of criticism. “The solution is to embed the principle of controversy in the definition of economic theory” (Freeman, 2010: 1602). This can be seen as a way of placing epistemic uncertainty at the heart of the discipline of economics, the continuous encouragement of opposing views. “Actually, the objective of critical pluralist economics is an end to orthodoxy” (Freeman, 2010: 1602). The clear resonance with our foregoing discussion continues. Orthodoxy *as such* is what we need to combat, not any specific orthodoxy such as neoclassical economics. I am, however, doubting that pluralism or controversy can be the definition of a discipline – this must, I think, refer to the subject matter in line with for example Morgan’s (2015) sketch for an alternative SBSE, while retaining an emphasis on the role of controversy (whereas now economics is often understood as a method (Eliassen, 2016)).

How can pluralism be incorporated in the SBSE and the education in general?

Once we understand the kind of students required, and the kind of courses that can produce such students, the kind of educational institution required becomes clear. I have shown that this calls for a radical inversion of the criterion of quality, such that the excellence becomes once again synonymous with range of intellect in place of exclusivity of technique. (Freeman, 2010: 1609)

The quality of an institution, then, should be judged according to pluralism – how well it teaches for diversity and critical thinking, and to what extent diversity and controversy is reflected among staff’s interests and publication records.

¹⁹⁰ A prime example of such confusion is Tirole’s (2015) statement quoted at the end of the previous chapter.

In general, on Freeman's view, pluralism means that students should be able to evaluate competing claims to knowledge on contested issues – to judge under which conditions theories and assumptions are valid and when not; this receptivity to a variety of ideas and the ability to critically assess them in turn fuels the creation of new theories and knowledge in the critical areas. The attempt to subsume all theoretical efforts under a single methodology, which is currently taking place in economics, is the exact opposite of what is required to protect the discipline against error and weakness (Freeman, 2010). Science progresses through resistance and accommodation (Pickering, 1990). By seeking to avoid the resistance that all scientific endeavours *necessarily* encounter, economics becomes less scientific.

Bearing the abstract move in mind, however, it might be that Freeman takes too grim a view of the implications of the benchmark statement. We should not expect content descriptors that point to the inclusion of particular heterodox theories, although it might be desirable to remove or widen the clearly neoclassical bullet points. However, changing the SBSE does not in itself lead to pluralism. Yet the SBSE naturally reflects and reproduces some of the scope for pluralism (Morgan, 2015). It is therefore of interest to look for formulations that allow the inclusion of heterodox – and in general contending – perspectives.

Garnett (2009b) evaluates the SBSE, and concludes somewhat more optimistically. He claims that there is a certain common ground between heterodox and orthodox “educators” on many pedagogical issues. The breadth and strength of this common ground [values such as intellectual autonomy] opens the door to cooperation across paradigmatic borders, that educators of all brands can work together to improve critical thinking, reflective judgment, etc. Seen in this way, the SBSE does provide some hope. There is a degree of flexibility here that should be exploited by faculties and departments (Garnett, 2009b). Perhaps heterodox economists have to read the intentions of orthodox economists more charitably: “heterodox critics of mainstream economics should resist the temptation to see the educational goals formulated by their mainstream colleagues (such as ‘thinking like an economist’) as inherently antithetical to pluralism and critical thinking” (Garnett, 2009b: 67). He states that there is potential for critical thinking inherent, yet unconsciously taught, in it. Is this realistic? Of course all matters have the potential of encouraging thought; but the narrowest mainstream training does not inherently stimulate critical thinking more than watching the washing machine go round. Yet

Garnett (2009b: 68) suggests that we have to “reach out in good faith to all educators who might be persuaded to join us in our quest for more open, critical and meaningful ways of educating economists”. This we should definitely do, to the extent that good faith leads us anywhere. Denis (2009) and Morgan (2015), however, take a less beneficial reading of the statement. The institutional complex may render the prospects of introducing proper liberal education similar to the chances of “pigs flying” (Colander and McGoldrick, 2009: 616). Yet it is true that there is scope within the benchmark statement, and the pedagogical arguments are on the side of pluralists.

The premise of the promise is the following:

Intellectual autonomy is a value shared by all modern economists, regardless of methodological or ideological orientation. It provides a resonant language in which to discuss what is lacking in received modes of economics education and the appropriate ends and means of reform. (Garnett, 2009b: 66).

However, Garnett states that there will be a difference in how heterodox and orthodox economists, respectively, will understand the notion of autonomy and critical thinking – where the latter will have a more narrow view along the lines of critical, reflective application of orthodox economics. This again invokes the question of community membership, the border of which is so hard to determine, which Garnett (2011) acknowledges.

If we analyse Garnett’s argument in light of the Perry scheme, it seems that the scope he perceives in the SBSE does not take us much further than to students realizing the existence of multiplicity, and acquire the ability to appreciate and exercise the arguments for various positions. In other words, we are somewhere between level 4 and 6 on the Perry scheme. This means that the scope for pluralism that Garnett finds in the SBSE does not provide for a *fully capable scholar*, for full intellectual development. However, there is room for considerable agreement on improvement on the current standard curriculum and some of the basic steps required to achieve this.

Garnett’s paper was published before the benchmark review; he can take some more encouragement from the revised statement. The main point here is that, for the UK economics degrees, there is space for designing pluralist curricula, even though

the SBSE has clear neoclassical content and neoclassical economics would need to occupy a substantial place in the curricula.

Yet if it is true that there is basic agreement amongst educators on central educational values, the question is why we have stridden so far away from these ideals. The main constraint on pluralism seems to be the REF, the hiring and the journals. As we have seen, these are governed by an arbitrary criterion of quality, perpetuated by the Matthew effect. However, this notion of quality is instilled in economists precisely through their training. The pyramid of economics is raised on the foundation of the curricula. This foundation can be changed. And this means that the whole edifice can be changed as well. In John Dewey's words,

(...) social conditions tend to instigate and confirm wrong habits of thinking by authority, by conscious instruction, and by the even more insidious half-conscious influences of language, imitation, sympathy, and suggestion. Education has (...) to undermine and destroy the accumulated and self-perpetuating prejudices of long ages. (Dewey, 1910: 25)

Preliminary conclusion

Now, the purposes of this thesis are to arrive at a consistent justification and conception of pluralism and an evaluation of its possible implementation. Garnett (2009b: 61) defines pluralism as both a philosophy and a practice, as "(1) a particular view of knowledge and education; and (2) a learner's capacity for critical thinking and intellectual autonomy".¹⁹¹ I think Garnett hereby elucidates the spirit of pluralism, but he is not sufficiently precise (try putting "pluralism is..." in front of these two points). Let us attempt a clearer conception, by returning to our hero Feyerabend:

Knowledge (...) is not a series of self-consistent theories that converges towards an ideal view; it is not a gradual approach to the truth. It is rather an ever increasing *ocean of mutually incompatible alternatives*, each single theory, each fairy-tale, each

¹⁹¹ Garnett juxtaposes "the student-centred aim of intellectual freedom" and "the teacher-centred aim of paradigmatic diversity" (Garnett, 2009b: 58). There is not necessarily a contradiction here. Yet in this way, I think Garnett is implicitly supporting the abstract move, in shifting the focus away from specific traditions and on to issues of academic freedom, intellectual development and justice. This interpretation emerges even more clearly from Garnett (2011).

myth that is part of the collection forcing the others into greater articulation and all of them contributing, via this process of competition, to the development of our consciousness. (Feyerabend, 2010: 14)

I think this quote from Feyerabend points to the essence of what pluralism entails. The first part of the quote maintains that there is no hope of approaching absolute truth. This is due to the fact of inescapable epistemic uncertainty. The best we can hope for is to improve the reasons and arguments for the methods we choose and the theoretical explanations we present in this myriad of competing perspectives – now, and for evermore.

The last point in the quote has a clear Hegelian flavour, and it is consonant with most of the theories I have considered in this chapter: liberal education is about fostering citizens and truth-pursuing academics, recognizing the developmental path that is needed to foster capabilities of truth-pursuit. This is a development of consciousness and it follows a dialectical process (on Mill's scheme as well). Moreover, and crucially, this process leads to toleration of diverging perspectives through learning to appreciate their grounds and contextual validity. It leads to the *encouragement* of different approaches because one has realized the necessity thereof for both character formation and scientific progress. In other words, it fosters the “tempered equality” (which encompasses equal access, tolerance as well as encouragement of all relevant approaches (Longino, 2002)) required to correct the institutional shortcomings of the economics discipline of today. The *pluralistic* academy, then, is a scientific community inhabited by *capable* scholars in this sense. However, pluralism also requires a well-functioning sphere for critical public discussion of ideas. If, as I indicated in the previous chapter, the discipline's failure on the other three criteria for critical discourse (venue, uptake and public standards), stems from failure on tempered equality, then a pluralistic educational reform is precisely what is needed in order to satisfy both the moral and the epistemological demands in the calls for pluralism. The main factor that can inhibit this is “vested interest” (Longino, 2002) – and to assess this we would need to explore the wider power relations in society in relation to the discipline.

Pluralism is an attitude – an attitude of *more than one* – but it is not a number. This takes on the concrete meaning of tolerating and encouraging *other* views. A *pluralistic* discipline is one inhabited by scholars with this attitude. *Pluralism in*

teaching – always teaching *more than one* approach – is integral to achieving this. Pluralism in teaching means *at least two* perspectives on any subject matter, but, in line with the abstract move, these perspectives cannot be specified. It is the contrasting of ideas that is crucial, the alternative, abstractly understood, must come alive before us; the content is of secondary importance. *In this way, pluralism is both the means and the end of scholarly development as well as of truth-pursuing activities.*¹⁹² On a consistent interpretation, the calls for pluralism are a call for liberal education.

These are the general conclusions so far. The abstract definition of orthodoxy identified it as “not needing to think”. This is exactly what characterizes monistic modes of instruction. I said that pluralism was motivated by the need to think, which is precisely the foundation of liberal education. In this way, the abstract move has gone full circle. Does this mean that the analysis has come to an end?

Some considerations remain. Firstly, I need to make some reservations regarding the evidence and discussion in this chapter. To the extent that dominant curricula are based solely on mainstream economics, it fails on the account of liberal education.¹⁹³ In this light, the internal hierarchy of the economics discipline, propelling narrow scientific values through the Matthew effect, is rightly assessed as an indicator of missing intellectual development. It helps to explain why economists often rely on one scale of judgment; their education has not facilitated their appreciation of other evaluative criteria (for example, the committee evaluating the case for professorship, cited above). Liberal education is instrumental in acknowledging the contextual validity of different perspectives and values. Yet more research is needed in order to map the course contents of economics degrees over the world. In addition, modes of instruction and examination have to be given careful consideration. Nevertheless, this thesis has a hypothetical or conditional nature, based on the abstract problem situation of the tyranny of the majority. The existing evidence only serves to inform its relevance in pointing to the institutional deficiencies in the discipline. Thereby, pluralist, liberal education reform is identified as the locus of change. Is this a novel conclusion?

¹⁹² Following Garnett (2009a), this is analogous to freedom as means and end in the capability approach (Sen, 1999).

¹⁹³ This can be evaluated in specific educational institutions on the background of the discussion in this chapter, and more evidence is needed.

Dow (2009) gives an outline of what pluralist teaching could look like in macroeconomics – teaching through debates – on the topic of crises, by comparing New Keynesian and Postkeynesian theories. I see this as very much in line with the principles laid down in this chapter.¹⁹⁴ The present discussion in many ways serves as an under-labouring of pluralist intuitions and a synthesis of pluralist work to date – but it also shows what pluralism is *not*, for example a legislation of space for existing schools of thought.¹⁹⁵ The localization of the problem through sociological analysis underpins the conclusions further.

Orthodox economics education cannot be so sweepingly described as I have done here. There is also a difference between good and bad orthodox training; some courses rely more on practical applications, some more on various skills, some are more research-informed and updated. Becker (2004), for example, supports more real-world application and up-to-date research in undergraduate teaching. Mainstream educators such as Colander and McGoldrick (2009) call for broadening the graduate programme.¹⁹⁶ Already the COGEE report (Krueger, 1991) noted the increasing gap between theory and real world application in the economics curricula. Siegfried et al. (1991: 216), evaluating the economics major in the US, claimed that “comparing the outcomes of alternative theoretical constructs, merits greater emphasis”, and added the breadth requirement that

(...) [t]he chosen electives should be distributed to ensure an appreciation for the historical, international, and political context of economics. Such breadth will help students avoid a narrow parochial perspective based solely on marginalist thinking and should prepare them to deal sensibly with problems that involve other than atomistic models of individual choice. (Siegfried et al, 1991: 216)

The authors invite more courses on history of economic thought, economic history and comparative economic systems. They emphasize that the intellectual challenge

¹⁹⁴ Perhaps apart from Dow’s continued emphasis on incommensurable methodologies.

¹⁹⁵ Even if the abstract move disentangles pluralism from particular approaches, pluralist teaching practice naturally draws on existing or past alternatives.

¹⁹⁶ The authors state that there is no graduate training of economists in what they call “big think” and “teaching” questions and as opposed to “little think” and “research” questions, due to a lack of economists able to teach economic in a broad way to undergraduates, as is the traditional aim in the liberal arts colleges. This can clearly have some reinforcing mechanisms that consolidate the relative narrowness of the way economics is taught in both undergraduate and graduate programmes.

that must be given to students does not require formal techniques or difficult examinations in these, but rather the sophisticated application of economic ideas in various contexts.

The fact that many mainstream educators agree on the shortcomings of economics curricula, if not always on the extent of the reform, hints that the institutional problem might have deeper roots than my analysis thus far indicates. Heyne (1995) suggests that there is a prisoner's dilemma in play: Researchers are more interested in researching their narrow field than in teaching; abstract arithmetic and graphical problems demand no preparation for the teacher, yet keep the students preoccupied with grasping the matter, and the textbooks already exist. These factors are, naturally, important. Yet they do not explain why other disciplines are not in the same situation, at least not to the same extent.

It is not a conscious suppression of alternatives (on the teaching side), but rather an adverse institutional structure that is the main problem. If it is so that both orthodox and heterodox educators (and employers, for that matter) believe that economics education needs change, I do not think the prisoner's dilemma suffices to explain it. There might be something that orthodox economics normally overlooks – like power – that explains the predicament:

Powerful traditions that have means of forcing others to adopt their ways have of course little use for the relational character of value judgments (...) and they can make their victims forget it as well (this is called 'education'). But let the victims get more power, let them revive their own traditions and the apparent superiority will disappear like a (...) dream. (Feyerabend, 1978: 9)

If this is the case, it is not enough, as Garnett is hoping for, to reach out to mainstream educators in good faith. Is it possible, then, to endow the victims with more power? My concluding remarks will sketch a route for an explanation. Yet the full exploration of this must be the topic of another work.

Chapter 7. In place of a conclusion: the limits to pluralism

(...) proliferation may have to be enforced by non-scientific agencies (...).
(Feyerabend, 2010: 32)

In this dissertation I have investigated what pluralism is, how it can be consistently justified, and how it can be implemented given the current state of the economics discipline. The discussion has been based on the premises 1) that pluralism is desirable, 2) that a consistent conception of pluralism is feasible, which answers both the epistemological and the ethical condition for pluralism, and thereby serves as a solution to the problem of monism, and 3) that pluralism thus conceived can actually be implemented. In other words, *if pluralism is possible and desirable*, we need it for the reasons I have stated and it takes the form that I have described. I have, however, not fully investigated whether it is in fact possible and desirable.¹⁹⁷ There are natural reasons why the introduction of pluralism might not be feasible after all, as well as it not being the desirable solution to the problems of a lack of truth and justice, respectively. In this chapter, I will provide some reflections on both these issues, and the former will take prominence.

On the question of desirability, some argue that tendencies toward consensus and hierarchy are beneficial for the progress of science. Cole (1983) states that consensus is necessary for progress and order. Cole takes his lead from Polanyi's (1963) appeal to authority in science. Polanyi (1963: 1013) notes the potential abuse of "orthodoxy" and that the right to dissent may be put at danger, yet authority and orthodoxy is "indispensable to the discipline of scientific institutions". In Cole's (1983: 136) words: "So important is the maintenance of consensus (...) that it is better to reject an occasional idea which turns out to be correct than to be too open to all new ideas at the expense of preserving consensus." In other words, authors such as Polanyi (1963), Kuhn (1996 [1970]) and Dow (2004; 2008), think that a certain paradigmatic consensus is prerequisite for the accumulation of knowledge. I have argued that this is contradictory to pluralism, at least to the extent that it inhibits

¹⁹⁷ Another potential weakness in the analysis is the linking of the term pluralism to the solution to monism. That is, liberal education reform can be the solution to monism, without itself qualifying for the name pluralism. Still, the thesis could be seen as an analysis in which I arrive at *liberal education* as what is needed to meet the underlying demands of the calls for pluralism.

proliferation, but I have not presented evidence that such consensus can be escaped.

Furthermore, I have noted above, following Marqués and Weisman (2010) and Skorupski (2007) that the epistemic efficiency of the perennial encouragement of alternatives has not been demonstrated. Yet great leaps of knowledge come from unexpected areas, from heterodoxy, almost by definition. However, as regards day-to-day scientific activity, we do not have conclusive evidence for the epistemic efficiency of pluralism in the Mill-Feyerabend sense. This does not, however, undermine the conclusion that pluralism is achieved by way of liberal education. If the outcome in a discipline inhabited by liberally educated scholars is still monotheoretical (albeit not monistic in the sense of methodological insistence), this is the best we can do.

Furthermore, Cole introduces a distinction between core and frontier:

Whereas the core contains a relatively small number of theories or exemplars, the frontier contains a much broader and more loosely woven web of knowledge. By this I mean that science at the research frontier is a great deal less rational and predictable than our imagery suggests. (Cole, 1983: 131)

A similar picture of economics is drawn by Colander (2000): neoclassical economics is dead and there is a myriad of cutting-edge research going on.¹⁹⁸ Cole's point is in line with McCloskey (1985; 1994), who points out the discrepancy between what economists preach and practice. No one follows the clear-cut methodological rules they claim to follow, neither the orthodox economists nor their critics. This, however, leads us to the shortcoming of McCloskey's position, noted above, i.e. the analysis of how power influences the discipline, a factor which is arguably not sufficiently dealt with by the sociologists of science in the American tradition such as Cole and Merton.

An authentic science of science cannot be constituted unless it radically challenges the abstract opposition (...) between immanent or internal analysis, regarded as the province of the epistemologist, which recreates the logic by which science creates its specific problems, and external analysis, which relates those problems to the social conditions of their appearance. (Bourdieu, 1975: 22)

¹⁹⁸ In a similar vein, Davis (2009) criticizes Lawson for using out-of-date conceptions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

Even if the Matthew Effect is propelled internally as a *perpetuum mobile*, its *primus motor* may lie outside of the discipline. This leads us to the potentially largest obstacle to pluralism.

Limit #1: Power struggle

To some, the solution sketched in the previous chapter may appear naïve. Even if any reasoned understanding of the current situation in the economics profession – and, in particular, in economics education – must arrive at the conclusion that pluralistic reform is desirable, this might not, and probably will not, happen in practice. The reason is, of course, that *reason* is not the sole governing force, either in the economics discipline or in academia at large or in society as such. The use of reason with the aim of mutual understanding pertain only to certain realms of our human activities and arguably to a decreasing number of these. In looking at the social dimension of scientific practice as a sphere of interaction, I have not ascribed much weight to the power of interests – even if I have not overlooked or undermined it. Yet this procedure runs the risk of concealing the main factors:

[T]he doxosophers, the professors of false science, learned in appearance and learned in appearances, cannot legitimate either the dispossession that they effect by the arbitrary constitution of an esoteric learning inaccessible to the laity, or the delegation that they demand by arrogating to themselves the monopoly of certain practices or of reflexion on those practices, unless they can impose the belief that their false science is perfectly independent of the social demands which it could not satisfy so perfectly if it ceased to proclaim so loudly that it refuses to serve them. (Bourdieu, 1975: 35)

In Bourdieu's radical view, the struggle between scientific approaches is a struggle for prestige and influence. Yet for a situation anywhere close to the ideal I have drawn up to be realized, it is required that there is no undue (tacit or explicit) influence on the scientific process by external power relations (for example as a result of class conflict), or that the prime motivation of scholars is personal prestige rather than the pursuit of knowledge. If Bourdieu is right, genuine pluralism is impossible, and paradigmism is the only way forward for heterodox economics. Even heterodoxy can be seen as having an interest in concealing the real mechanisms at play:

The field of argument which orthodoxy and heterodoxy define by their struggles is demarcated against the background of the field of *doxa*, the aggregate of the presuppositions which the antagonists regard as self-evident and outside the area of argument: the censorship exercised by orthodoxy – and denounced by heterodoxy – conceals a more radical censorship which is also harder to detect because it is constitutive of the very functioning of the field, and because it bears on the totality of what is admitted by the mere fact of belonging to the field, and on the totality of what is set beyond discussion by the mere fact that the agents accept the issues at stake in argument, *i.e.* the consensus on the objects of dissensus, the common interests underlying conflicts of interest, all the undiscussed and unthought areas tacitly kept outside the *limits* of the struggle. (Bourdieu, 1975: 34)

According to Bourdieu, the very content of scientific controversy serves to hide the function of the field as a whole in the class struggle.

There are two alternative readings of this for the situation in economics, depending on how we determine community membership, “belonging to the field”: 1) heterodoxy is excluded from discourse because it threatens to overthrow the established social order (from either left or right, since the Austrians are also in the frame); 2) heterodoxy has a common interest with orthodoxy in maintaining the social order, within certain confines.

The second alternative renders unclear what are the excluded perspectives. The fact that for some heterodox economists, most notably Marxists, the theoretical and political struggles are one and the same seems to suggest that this reading is incorrect; although there remains a possibility that there is a second-order exclusion of which we are unaware, precisely because the “consensus on dissensus” succeeds in suppressing these “undiscussed and unthought areas”. Starting from the first alternative, the consistent way to interpret Bourdieu’s perspective in our context may be to understand Bourdieu’s “heterodoxy” as Lee’s (2009) “heretics” rather than his “blasphemers”. Thus Bourdieu’s heterodox (mainstream heretics) are behavioural and experimental and empirical economists who have to some extent redefined the field of economics over the past few decades. This reading also chimes with the fact that none of these mainstream economists speaks of class or ideology. The blasphemers,

heterodox economists (in common usage of the term), are silently excluded.¹⁹⁹ This invokes Davis' (2009) and Colander's (2007) recommendations that heterodox economists should aim at shaping a pluralist discipline from within the mainstream. Lawson (2009a) rightly rebuts these claims because they do not see that all heterodox economics is a revolt against the established order – be it on methodological or, as in Bourdieu's view, political, grounds.²⁰⁰

Apart from his rather dismal view of scientific discourse, Bourdieu's analysis of how the discipline is maintained and controlled by means of journal gatekeepers, inculcation, and attribution of status is consonant with my analysis above – the main difference being that he does not see a way out of this predicament from within science. Regardless of Bourdieu's precise take on this, to what extent is the discipline of economics dominated by power and strategic interests? I will give some cursory reflections.

The causes of formalism

We have seen that mainstream economics has come under criticism for an over-reliance on mathematical modelling techniques and insufficient grasp of the workings of a modern monetary economy. Lawson (2003) claims that the “insistence on mathematical deductivism” renders the discipline ontologically irrelevant for an “open system”. Whatever its precise defining characteristics, critics of economics emphasize its disconnection from reality following a “formalist revolution” (Blaug, 2003).²⁰¹ In the face of persistent empirical anomalies such as financial crises, there seems to be a lack of ontological commitment.

Although Lawson's conception of mainstream economics as the insistence on mathematical-deductivist modelling can be contested, it is true that the use of mathematics in economics has been on the increase since World War II. Regardless of how we define current mainstream economics, the dominant approach is tightly wed to the use of mathematical modelling. In its beginning, neoclassical economics was, however, not so technical – even if there were quite a few economists, particularly in

¹⁹⁹ Yet insofar as behavioural economists and traditional neoclassicals are essentially of the same kind, Bourdieu's struggle is descriptively inaccurate.

²⁰⁰ Given that there is a de facto censorship on methodological grounds, methodology could be intricately linked with ideology.

²⁰¹ Mirowski (2002), for example, emphasizes economics' mutation into a cyborg science.

France, who championed the use of maths in economics (Lawson, 2003). The question is how this turn towards the technization of the subject was initiated.

Internal and external histories of the discipline shed light on the rise of formalist economics.²⁰² Lawson (2003) shows that the attempts to mathematize economics had taken place well before this type of modelling became dominant; Walras met substantial resistance to his abstract mathematical theory of the economic system – general equilibrium theory – because it was seen as disconnected from reality. If the mathematization of economics did not take place when the relevant maths was developed, why did it take place at all? The moment of appropriation in Lawson's story seems to be the McCarthyist period in the US. This coincided with the influence from the Bourbaki School in mathematics and its study of pure mathematical structures. In Lawson's account, the mathematization and the disconnection of economics from reality, appear largely as an unfortunate event (which has been self-propelled once it occurred).

Morgan and Rutherford (1997) account for the change from interwar pluralism in the US, in which different perspectives were treated “even-handedly”, to post-war formalism. They also stress the import of the Bourbaki School and the need for economists to appear politically neutral behind a veil of mathematics in the McCarthy era as Keynesians and Marxists were purged from the academy on political grounds. The change from interwar institutionalism to post-war neoclassicism is seen as a result of a change in political climate, the technization of the field being a by-product of the same turn. It is not the internal history, but external accident that has shaped the form of modern economics:

Those who find modern neoclassical economics unconnected to the real-world economy are apt to blame increasing formalism in some form or other for this state of affairs and to blame the profession for this move. But instead, as we have argued, formalism should first be seen as the outcome of various external contingencies, not the cause of internal ones. (Morgan and Rutherford, 1997: 18)

In a slightly different story, Mirowski (1989; 2002) has demonstrated the shaping of neoclassical economics on the template of classical mechanics, and the subsequent

²⁰² Weintraub (2002a) accounts for the historical import of mathematics into economics.

influx from information sciences, coupled with the important role of economics in the Cold War research agendas of the Cowles Commission, RAND Corporation, etc.²⁰³

These stories revolve around mathematical formalism and economic rationality as the central elements in the discipline, in its perceived alienation from human life and detachment from reality. However, since these accounts primarily stress historical contingencies, they do not suffice to explain prolonged ontological detachment. How does rational and formalist orthodox economics survive despite its apparent frictions in the world? Lawson (2003) does mention the admiration, respect and awe mathematics receives in society as an accommodating factor in the process. He might be overlooking the full ideological force of this point.

Limit #2: The colonization of economics

This takes us back to Habermas. We stated that deviations from an ideal speech situation could be due to either systematically distorted communication or the strategic retention of power. Liberal education reform largely answers to the former possibility. My present reflections invoke the latter case.

Discourse based on communicative action can break down. In Habermas' theory, communicative action is characteristic of the *lifeworld*, whereas strategic action is characteristic of the *system*. Habermas (1984 [1981]: 82) explains the former term: "[T]he cultural tradition shared by a community is constitutive of the lifeworld which the individual member finds already interpreted. This intersubjectively shared *lifeworld* forms the background for communicative action." The lifeworld is the sphere for cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization. It is the sphere in which meaning is shaped in human life and reproduced between generations. Finlayson contrasts the two realms as follows:

[S]ocialization in the lifeworld is a kind of moralization – a process of getting used to acting in accordance with these ideals. By contrast, systems inculcate the instrumental habits of treating others as the means to one's ends, and foster indifference towards the ends of others. (Finlayson, 2005: 60)

²⁰³ The latter is also comprehensively dealt with in Erickson et al. (2013), which ties the historical development of the concept of rationality, as it is represented in economics, to these Cold War research constellations.

The system has arisen historically in order to coordinate interactions in an increasingly complex society. There are particularly two subsystems that play a crucial role in modern society, namely *economy* and *state administration*. These subsystems are governed by their respective *steering media*, i.e. *money* and *power*. They serve an instrumental role in the *rationalization* of the lifeworld, that is, to make human interaction more efficient through a process of *system integration*. For example, the market can coordinate transactions between anonymous subjects through money, and the state organizes its subjects by means of bureaucratic power. We need this form of system integration in order for modern society to function, but actions so co-ordinated are impersonal. This paves the way for the possibility that the impersonal, end-orientated interactions encroach upon the personal interactions aiming at mutual understanding so that the strategic actions of the system come to dominate aspects of the lifeworld:

[C]apitalist modernization follows a pattern such that cognitive-instrumental rationality surges beyond the bounds of the economy and state into other, communicatively structured areas of life and achieves dominance there at the expense of moral-political and aesthetic-practical rationality. (Habermas, 1989 [1981]: 304)

It is important to note here that the rationalization of the lifeworld is not inherently detrimental, but it has the potential to be so. If the use of steering media spreads extensively, the result can be a *colonization* of the lifeworld, involving social pathologies such as anomie, disintegration, alienation, demoralization and social instability (Habermas, 1989 [1981]). However, the lifeworld can potentially resist colonization and try to keep the systemic mechanisms in check, use them for our benefit. The point is that the lifeworld and the system are pulling in opposite directions. Given human nature, the lifeworld has precedence and must be preserved; yet the system is needed as well.

If communicative action is what we inherently strive for, then, clearly, it is a problem if the spheres in which we live, breathe and act, work according to principles that encourage strategic action and predominantly rely on instrumental rather than communicative rationality. Importantly, such colonization is a structural phenomenon, and not mere chance, as in our account of economics above:

It is not the differentiation and independent development of cultural value spheres that lead to the cultural impoverishment of everyday communicative practice, but only the penetration of forms of economic and administrative rationality into areas of action that resist being converted over to the media of money and power because they are specialized in cultural transmission, social integration, and child rearing, and remain dependent on mutual understanding as a mechanism for coordinating action. If we assume, further, that the phenomena of a loss of meaning and freedom do not turn up by chance but are structurally generated, we must try to explain why media-steered subsystems develop *irresistible inner dynamics that bring about* both the colonization of the lifeworld and its segmentation from science, morality, and art. (Habermas, 1989 [1981]: 330-331)

As the arena for mass education in the modern world, the university serves system integration as well as social integration. Given the existing social order, we cannot disregard the *de facto* vocational purpose that universities serve, although this must be subordinated to their innate epistemological and ethical purpose. In its role as the scene for disinterested scientific pursuit, the university is an elevated sphere for theoretical discourse and hence governed by communicative rationality *par excellence*, even if there has always been changing systemic pressures on it. Scientific practice has its origin in the lifeworld (Habermas, 2001).²⁰⁴ Habermas (1987: 20) “seriously believe[s] that it is the communicative and discursive forms of scientific argumentation which (...) hold the learning processes together in their various functions” and moreover points out the inescapably social nature of knowledge production. Scientific discourse is egalitarian and universalistic in its content. Although the modern university serves many purposes and is under a range of influences, its *raison d’être* is still the pursuit of truth through theoretical discourse,

²⁰⁴ Yet Habermas (1987) makes reservations against idealized visions of the university. He contests the premise that “[a]n institution remains functional only so long as it vitally embodies its original idea” (Habermas, 1987: 3). The idea of the university stems from a time when philosophy had a prominent role in the academic world, as a queen of the sciences. This original, romantic, idea of Humboldt, Schleiermacher, Fichte and Schelling, was akin to that of Newman, involving e.g. the notion that “as ideas are comprehended they simultaneously enter into the knower’s moral character, thus freeing it from all one-sidedness. This elevation to the absolute opens the way for the all-around development of the individual person” (Habermas, 1987: 10). After the demise of an all-encompassing philosophy, and with the increasing heterogeneity within universities, as well as the universities being increasingly interwoven with the economic and administrative subsystems, the “corporative body” needs a different anchoring in order to retain its connection to the lifeworld.

based on communicative action between its practitioners as facilitated by the norms for critical discourse. For the university to remain rooted in the lifeworld rather than being absorbed by the subsystems, Habermas (1987: 15) cites Schelsky, “countervailing measures must come into play, ones which will not arise automatically but can only be generated by creative efforts”.

Economics is in a special situation in the wider context of lifeworld and system as it provides the language of the economic subsystem. Habermas notes, for example, that the strategic conception of action is linked to the depiction of agency in neoclassical economics. This is an important first realization of economics’ role in society. How do questions of colonization relate to the view of the discipline as based on formalism and rationality?

Thinking becomes technique

In Husserl’s (1970 [1954]) view, attempts at formulating science in purely abstract, formal logical systems leads to a “technization” of science which empties it of meaning: “Here the *original* thinking that genuinely gives meaning to this technical process and truth to the correct results is excluded” (Husserl, 1970 [1954]: 46). A constant awareness of the initial reasons for employing the technique is required in order for it to give rise to knowledge about the world. “Even more, it must be freed of the character of an *unquestioned tradition* which, from the first invention of the new idea and method, allowed elements of obscurity to flow into its meaning” (Husserl, 1970 [1954]: 47).

Precisely this is maintained by critics of mainstream economics: its methodological formalism has led to obscure theories such as efficient financial markets and real business cycles (Eliassen, 2016), as well as to obsession with technical details of a general equilibrium of hypothetical markets. Empirical work is to a large extent equated with statistics/econometrics, and is in a significant way removed from “empirical” in its original empiricist sense, as sensory impressions. Data sets, which the analyst frequently has not collected herself (Morgan, 2011), are the objects of the physical world inhabited by economists, sensing the world through the use of statistical software which are a form of bodily extensions. The invention of a mathematical dream world, in this alienating phenomenological sense, is precisely what Lawson and others have objected to using different words.

The exemplary economist might know the value of his method; yet the

training of the next generations of economists tend to focus on the acquirement of technique with only perfunctory regard to the meaning of its application. “The developed method (...) is handed down; but its true meaning is not necessarily handed down with it” (Husserl, 1970 [1954]: 56). The disconnection between technique and world is made possible by the “unquestioned tradition”, i.e. by the lack of pluralism. Analogous to pluralist demands for teaching of the history of ideas, Husserl explains that scientific practice only remains meaningful “*if the scientist has developed in himself the ability to inquire back into the original meaning of all his meaning-structures and methods, i.e. into the historical meaning of their primal establishment*” (Husserl, 1970 [1954]: 56). The modern economist becomes like Husserl’s scientist,

(...) at best a highly brilliant technician of the method – to which he owes the discoveries which are his only aim – [who] is normally not at all able to carry out such reflections. In his actual sphere of inquiry and discovery he does not know at all that everything these reflections must clarify is even in *need* of clarification, and this for the sake of (...) true knowledge of the *world itself, nature itself*. And this is precisely what has been lost through a science which has become a *τέχνη* [*techne*] (...). Every attempt to lead the scientist to such reflections, if it comes from a nonmathematical, nonscientific circle of scholars, is rejected as “metaphysical.” The professional who has dedicated his life to these sciences must, after all – it seems obvious to him – know best what he is attempting and accomplishing in his work. The philosophical needs (...) aroused even in these scholars (...) are satisfied by themselves in a way that is sufficient for them – but of course in such a way that the whole dimension which must be inquired into is not seen at all and thus not at all dealt with. (Husserl, 1970 [1954]: 56-57)

Thus the lived experience of subjects disappears to the fringes of science, and is best disregarded, as Andre Gorz explains:

[R]eality as we perceive it has been stripped of all its tangible qualities, the lived experience of original thought has been ‘switched off’ (...). Only what can be calculated, quantified and expressed in figures is ‘real’. Everything else has only a ‘subjective’ existence (...) and must be relegated to the margins of thought. (Gorz, 1989: 84-85)

Gorz applies Husserl's analysis to economics, and connects it to Habermas' analysis of the colonization of the lifeworld by the system. Mathematization of economics can be seen to lead to a detachment from the world, in which we do not need to maintain it through our own intentions. Economic rationality – Habermas' instrumental (and in its crude neoclassical form, strategic) rationality – has become a substitute for intentional, conscious, meaning-seeking activities in work and life, and the economically rational decision-making is "removed from all possibility of rational examination and criticism by the fact that economic rationality itself is formalized into calculation procedures and formulae *inaccessible either to debate or reflection*" (Gorz, 1989: 122, original emphasis). The result is debate on mere technicalities. Thought is stripped of subjectivity; subjects (be it the computerized worker or the economist) are merely operators who carry out certain mathematical procedures led by a naïve belief in absolute objectivity. "Mathematical formalization (...) turns thinking into a technique" (Gorz, 1989: 123).

We see the affinity with Lawson's criticism of formalism and event regularity, in a renewed context: "Thanks to these formulae subjects can become absent from and innocent of their operations (...), mathematically formalizing any process (...) which can be reduced to a mechanism governed by laws" (Gorz, 1989: 124). Gorz' account is rather functional, and he states that his aim is to describe and not explain. Following Habermas, he sees the extension of instrumental reason to domains it is not suited to govern – social integration, education, the shaping of individuals and identity – as an irresistible dynamic that throws the lifeworld into crisis. He links together the technization and monetarization of relationships – something we clearly see and in particular can recognize in the university systems of publishing, hiring and research funding:

Within large organizations, professional success requires a will to succeed according to the purely technical efficiency criteria of the function one occupies, irrespective of content. It demands a spirit of competition and opportunism, combined with subservience towards superiors. (Gorz, 1989: 36)

This puts my sociological analysis in a larger picture. The administrative machinery creates incentives for cognitive-instrumental action, which is disconnected from and might even run counter to the inherent aim of science: the quest for truth. It steers the

academics in a certain direction: into producing an endless stream of papers, for example. They become competitive rather than co-operative. The apparent neutrality of mathematics hides the ideological import, and workings, of economic theory. Is economics as a discipline, with its models of instrumental agents and neutral signifiers, a vehicle for *the colonization of the lifeworld by the system*? Has economics encroached upon its own theoretical discourse, thus freeing it from its need for a relationship with the world? This would contribute to the explanation of why economics systematically fails at institutionalizing the norms for critical discourse. The investigation of the ideological forces that potentially govern the discipline of economics (and beyond) is a highly interesting avenue for future research.

This would re-open Lawson's case that we closed as insufficient as a basis for pluralism. If the external restraints to pluralism are linked to the technization of the lifeworld, then the solution to the problem of monism lies in rehabilitating the lifeworld. Yet it is hard to see that this can to any significant extent be changed from within the discipline, and herein lies the hidden naïvety of Lawson's position. Still his *social ontology* is given fresh purpose, insofar as it encourages us to take our common reality – the lifeworld in which meaning is reproduced – as the point of departure in our search for knowledge about the world. In the same way, Dow's prioritization of open system ontology would be warranted – with the same shortcomings of explanation. The methodology of orthodox economics can then no longer be regarded as arbitrary and in principle equivalent to heterodox alternatives. Heterodoxy is still – as stated in the abstract move – motivated by the need to think; yet the *not needing to think* that defines orthodoxy is no longer mere paradigmatic inertia, but rather the result of the imperatives of the economic and administrative subsystems. The imperative for us is then

(...) to protect areas of life that are functionally dependent on social integration through values, norms and consensus formation, to preserve them from falling prey to the systemic imperatives of economic and administrative subsystems growing with dynamics of their own. (Habermas, 1989 [1981]: 372-373)

If we go down this path, what is normally perceived as methodological inculcation takes on the form of ideological indoctrination. Economists are trained, not primarily to become good economists according to the established values – even if this is the

stated and perceived purpose – but to become maintenance men of the systemic order, handmaidens of the steering media, money and power. In this situation, pluralism can only emerge given concomitant change in fundamental social conditions.²⁰⁵

Limit #3: The violence of education

Despite his endorsement of Habermas, Gorz is sceptical of his “sociological” approach, which makes him conceive of individual identity as *completely* socially determined through the acquisition of language and culture. In Gorz’ phenomenological view, departing from “individual lived experience”, individuality exceeds the socially given lifeworld. Language is, in his view, a medium and a filter for expression that can never fully represent the individual’s experience, thus forcing the person into inauthenticity. We often experience that we are not able to communicate what we *really* feel, or mean. On this background, Gorz (1989: 176) suggests that: “All education is violence. Indeed, worse, it is rape.” No model of education, i.e. socialization, can accommodate true individuality as here conceived. We can of course never escape this inauthenticity; it is a fact of existence.²⁰⁶ Thus it may not be a fundamental criticism of our preferred model of liberal education, which seems to be the least *violent* conceivable model, since the individual is meant to experiment with ways of thinking under a minimum of constraints.

Gorz’ view of the individual can be contested.²⁰⁷ Yet it raises interesting questions as to the transformational potential of our solution, insofar as it (tacitly) draws on an idealized social conceptualization of the lifeworld: “the possibility of a critique that is not merely traditionalistic and conservative disappears, as does the possibility of autonomous action” (Gorz, 1989: 178), because the lifeworld is simply the existing language or culture. Protecting the lifeworld means protecting existing tradition. However, confronted with the modern “mega-machine” (Gorz, 1989: 179)

²⁰⁵ These remarks are all based on unconscious or subconscious factors. We have not dealt with factors – quite frequently cited – that might induce economists to consciously support a particular school of thought, motivated by ideology, power, prestige or money.

²⁰⁶ According to Gorz, individual expression therefore finds outlet in aberrations and art – or neuroses.

²⁰⁷ The felt discrepancy between language and inner intention is an undeniable fact. Yet the notion of an authentic, pre-social, self is contestable. One possible response to this starts from the Wittgensteinian insight that this sense of inauthenticity (or the quest for authenticity) is itself a “grammatical illusion”, i.e. a product of language. The concept of “I” or the self does not exist prior to language, which is, we are told, what distinguishes the human animal from the others who are lacking *logos*.

that radically transforms our ways of life, we are faced with new questions on how to form solidarities and relations. In a cryptic statement, which can be seen to echo the intrinsic purpose of my call for liberal education, Gorz writes that these changes are

(...) not accessible to objective knowledge, but only to a research-intervention through which an underlying, initially formless discourse will be brought to expression and turned into an articulate, methodical consciousness of the possibilities for action which are ultimately at issue. (Gorz, 1989: 179)

The flavour of this quote is similar to Feyerabend's (1981a) points on open discourse as well as his view on education. Pluralism is the handmaiden of scientific progress, of the as yet inconceivable unknown; it bears a promise of moving the horizon and as such it must nurture the individual's potential to break out of established patterns. Gorz may present an important criticism of Habermas, but for our purposes it is solved by Longino's understanding of the social aspect of science as interaction, which preserves the role for the creativity of the individual scientist.

Furthermore, the universal foundation of liberal education can be questioned from another perspective. A liberal education aims at shaping the free citizen in a liberal, value pluralistic society. It does presuppose a certain outlook associated with Western traditions. Sen (2010) argues that Rawls' philosophy of justice is one of "closed impartiality" in presupposing Western liberal values; yet in his own, allegedly "openly impartial", philosophy he preserves freedom as a universal value. From a different angle, Shweder (1986) claims that less than five per cent of the world's population subscribe to the postconventional level of morality that Habermas' discourse ethics presupposes, and that

the criteria of postconventional thinking include a cluster of ideas associated with Western liberal democracy: a belief in equal and universal human rights; allegiance to 'humanity' in general over one's tribe, community or nation; a proneness to overlook the differences between people (in sex, age, intelligence, religion, ethnicity) and emphasize their likeness; a secular (not religious) belief that life on earth is sacred; and a renunciation of power and force in getting others to accept your views. (Shweder, 1986: 188)

This cluster of ideas forms the background for this thesis and the abstract justification of pluralism. Thus, insofar as the ideas are historically and socially contingent, this poses a limit to the universal aspiration that may be implied by the abstract move and the armchair reflections that this can be criticized for inducing.

Conclusion

The feasibility of pluralism cannot be finally determined. The extent to which external ideological forces govern the discipline, whether resulting from class struggle or through a form of colonization, limits the possibility of its realization. Even if there are no good reasons against pluralism, there may be significant limits to the power of reason. Moreover, its epistemic desirability cannot be fully guaranteed; yet it is guaranteed to the extent that critical scholars and a well-functioning critical discourse is conducive to truth advancement. Its ethical desirability is contestable to the extent that any education, however “liberal”, excessively curbs individuals’ self-development, or overly socializes their inclinations in accordance with contingent values.

Nevertheless, the quest for truth and desire for justice are fundamental human proclivities, and therefore academic institutions should be shaped with an aim of facilitating these values. With the limits thus drawn up, I conclude: if there is something desirable and feasible that can consistently be called pluralism in economics, which would be a solution to the problem of monism, it is what I have described. Pluralism is an attitude of *more than one*, which takes on the concrete meaning of tolerating and encouraging *other* views. A *pluralistic* discipline is inhabited by scholars with this attitude. *Pluralism in teaching* is integral to achieving this. Pluralism is both the means and the end of scholarly development as well as of truth-pursuing activities. The solution to the consistent interpretation of the calls for pluralism takes the form of liberal education reform. The cursory reflections on the limits to pluralism drawn up in this chapter give rise to new questions of feasibility and implementation, which should be further addressed elsewhere.

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